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THE BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE
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Clarence Herbert New - Henry
C. Rowland - Seven Anderton
Bertram Atkey - George Worts'
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Photos by Burton Holmes, from Ewing Galloway

The BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

The McCall Company, Publisher, 230 Park Avenue, New York.



They Told Him Salesmen Were "Born"

But Now He Makes \$10,000 a Year

...Thanks to This Little Book

IT was just a little free book that made the difference between Ed Pinkham and the rest of the men in our shop. Nobody ever imagined that Ed would land even in the \$5,000-a-year class, let alone be making \$10,000 before he was thirty. Ed didn't know himself the abilities he had in him as a money-maker—he couldn't even sell the foreman the idea of recommending him for a five-dollar raise.

But one day a strange occurrence changed the whole course of his life. During his lunch hour Ed started to read a little book he had brought to work with him.

"It's a book called 'The Key To Master Salesmanship,' Bill," he told me. "It's the most amazing thing I ever read. I never dreamed there was so much in salesmanship. You ought to send for a copy yourself. Why don't you? It's free."

"Huh!" said Luke Jones. "Does that book tell you how to learn to be a salesman? A fellow has to be 'born' that way to be a good salesman."

Ed just smiled at that, but he said nothing. We kidded him about it, but he wouldn't tell us any more; just smiled. About four months later he left us. The foreman grinned when he heard about it. "I'll see you in a week or so, I guess, Ed. You can have your job back when you want it," he promised and Ed thanked him. But after he left Ed never came back and we wondered what luck he was having.

After that, I forgot him until last night. I was going home, when a snappy sedan drove up to the curb next to me. "Hi, Bill, going home?" said the man in the car. I looked up, and there was Ed dressed like a million dollars, leaning over the wheel.

"For Pete's sake!" I said. "What are you doing nowadays, Ed?" He smiled. "City sales manager for the Steel Castings Company," he told me. "What are you doing?"

"Still at the shop," I replied. "But what I want to know is, how do you come to be sales manager for Steel Castings? They're one of the biggest firms in the business."

Ed smiled again. "Remember that book on salesmanship that Luke Jones was kidding me about one day? Well, when I finished my salesmanship course, the Association I took it from gave me a choice of twenty-one jobs through their Free Employment Department. I got a wonderful job, and I had a wonderful training, so I've had a pretty successful time of it. They made me City Sales Manager three months ago at ten thousand dollars a year."

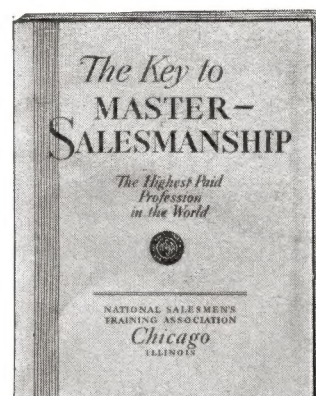
"Good night!" I said. "And Luke and I are still punching the old time clock!"

Ed looked at me seriously. "See here, Bill," he said. "Are you sport enough to risk two cents that you can do as well as I did? Then spend the two cents to write to the National Salesmen's Training Association tonight and get their free book. Then take their course. When you are qualified, their Free Employment Department will help you get a good sales job—every year they have calls for over 50,000 salesmen. Not only will they help you get the job, but they give you an ironclad money-back guarantee that you must be satisfied with the training received—or they refund your tuition."

"Bill, training is the only thing you need to make you a wonderful salesman. That stuff that Luke Jones talks about, that salesmen are born, is the biggest bunk I ever heard. They made a salesman out of me; they can make a salesman—and a good one—out of nearly anyone who will study. Every human being is born a salesman. Thousands of the greatest possible kind of salesmen live and die without knowing their own powers. The difference that makes the so-called born salesman successful is the fact that he has learned, through experience or through training, the fundamental selling secrets that always work. It's training in those secrets, which I got from the N. S. T. A., that made a \$10,000-a-year success out of me. You can master them as well as I did. Send for that little book tonight, and when you've got your training, come and see me."

FREE—TO EVERY MAN

A book—but what a book! Just seven ounces of paper and printers' ink—but it reveals facts and secrets that have led hundreds of men to success beyond their fondest expectations! See for yourself—FREE—why "The Key To Master Salesmanship" has increased the earning capacities of thousands, as a direct result to their reading it! You'll know, then, how J. H. Huppert of Michigan learned from its pages the secrets that enabled him to make \$525 in one week. You can understand how it helped A. A. Fidler of Alabama to raise his pay 700%. You'll know how it made C. B. Sterling of Florida, an officer and manager of his Company, raising his pay to ten times what it was. Learn for yourself the REAL TRUTH about salesmanship. You do not risk one penny or incur the slightest obligation. And since it may prove the turning point in your career it is certainly worth your while to fill out and mail the coupon below. Do it now!



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The BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

APRIL, 1931

Vol. 52, No. 6

Three Powerful Serials

- Six Seconds Dead** By George F. Worts 50
The climax of this great story of a man who survived the electric chair to solve a strange murder mystery.
- Tarzan, Guard of the Jungle** By Edgar Rice Burroughs 82
Wherein our champion adventurer turns back a Red raid and rescues a native princess.
- Devil's Salvage** By Henry C. Rowland 114
A girl in the power of a counterfeiter crew on a lonely Caribbean island fights for her life.

Short Stories You Will Remember

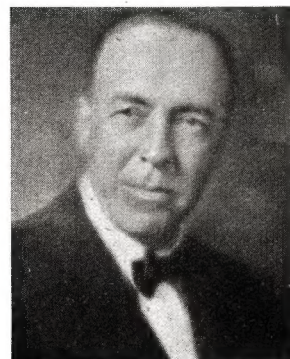
- Rope Rivals** By Arthur Hawthorne Carhart 8
Lively doings at the Frontier Days rodeo in Cheyenne.
- The Hard-rock Man** By Conrad Richter 15
A desperate struggle against hell and high water in a lead mine.
- Sea Wolves** By Captain Dingle 22
An attack by Chinese pirates culminates a weird voyage.
- A Soldier of France** By Armand Brigaud 32
I—"The Baptism of Fire," a biography of battle in the desert.
- Watch Out for Women** By Arthur K. Akers 44
When Gladstone's wife went on the warpath, things happened.
- Free Lances in Diplomacy** By Clarence Herbert New 67
Berlin strikes back at Russia in an amazing peace-time war.
- The Iron Man in the Mask** By Kingsley Moses 76
The romance of a baseball catcher who turned manager.
- Will It Ever Happen?** By Captain R. E. Dupuy 92
When they hanged the racketeers in Times Square.
- Treasure in Jaloon** By Bertram Atkey 95
A joyous tale of that picturesque rapsallion Captain Cormorant.

A Super-Exciting Novelette

- The Black Whisper** By Seven Anderton 100
A splendid underworld story by the author of "The Day of Doom."

Five Prize Stories of Real Experience

- Five Days in a Blow-out** By Ned Foster 129
An Idaho guide's most hazardous adventure.
- Wild Women** By G. Clarke 130
A British midshipman and the female of the species in the Irish rebellion.
- Buried Alive** By A. W. Evans 132
Caught behind a rock-slide underground, he lived to tell of it.
- The Rap** By Chas. A. Robideau 133
A garage man gets a trouble-call from a rum-runner.
- One Night I Remember** By J. E. March 135
What happened to a Canadian officer at Ypres.



EDGAR RICE
BURROUGHS

OVER eight million copies of books written by him have been sold; and the town where he lives has been named after one of his famous characters—Tarzana! That, we submit, is real fame, and well deserved.

Next month begins Mr. Burroughs' remarkable novel of a young American's desperate adventure in remote Cambodia,

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of
Hidden Men"**
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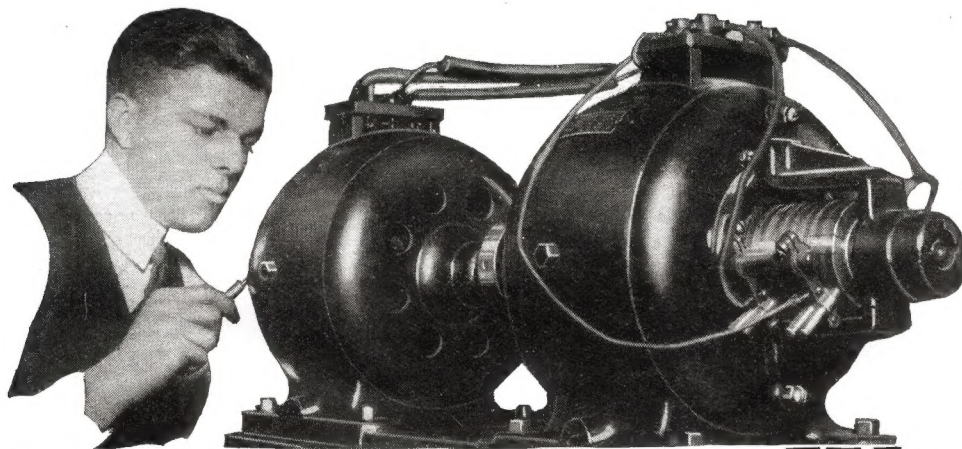
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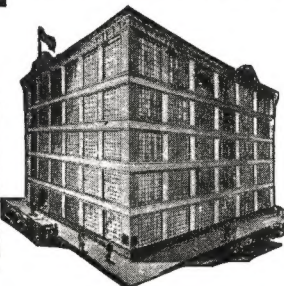
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Blue Book Writers



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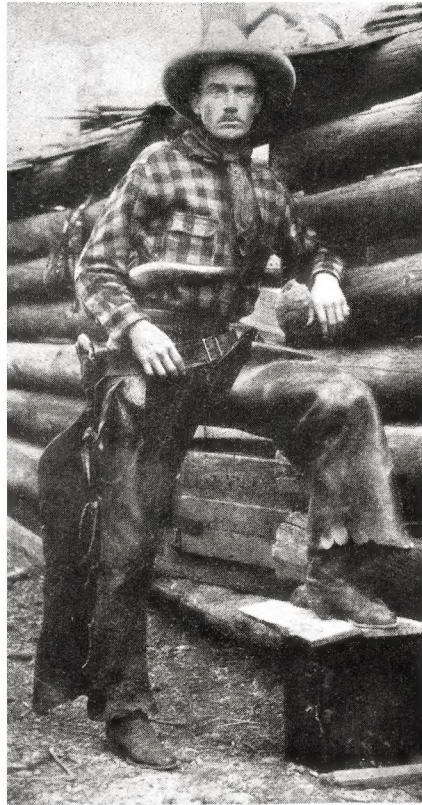
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JAY LUCAS

A TEXAS cowboy at the age of sixteen: the older men of the outfit were inclined to haze the boy at first—until one day, shooting from the saddle, he knocked over a running coyote with his revolver. "Just luck," Lucas insists—but after that he was accorded his full measure of respect as a man who really belonged. . . .

The war came along—and with it a hard blow to Jay Lucas. For an examining physician insisted on finding fault with his heart-action, and his application for enlistment was denied. Heartbroken, Lucas went off by himself into the Arizona mountains, and for eight years lived an almost hermit life as a hunter of predatory animals. He gathered a pack of bear-hounds, led by his famous old Mose, and in this remote and rugged cattle range made war on the grizzly, the wolf and the mountain-lion.

It was the loneliest life imaginable; yet Mr. Lucas had no intention of reverting to the wild himself. Now and then he rode into town, and usually he came back with a book or two along with his coffee and bacon and flour. Thus, reading and studying at night by the campfire, he carried on his education; and presently when the ambition to write came to him, he found himself possessed of the necessary rudiments of training—along with a wealth of interesting material from his unusual hunting experiences. His first story, "Fang of the Wolf," was published by BLUE BOOK.

Shortly thereafter Mr. Lucas journeyed to the famous physicians in Rochester, Minnesota, with the result that presently he found himself in almost perfect physical condition. Indeed, he tried this out quite successfully during a summer visit

at a prize-fighter's training-camp near by. . . . To complete the chronicle, Mr. Lucas married during his Minnesota sojourn, then moved to California—and is now back, with Mrs. Lucas, at his beloved Arizona ranch. Thence, from time to time, come to us those characteristic stories you have so much enjoyed. "Wild Jack," one of Mr. Lucas' typically lively tales, will appear in an early issue.

GEORGE ALLAN ENGLAND

OUR visitor opened his suitcase, unwrapped a package which he took therefrom, and placed on the editorial desk a fine brown antique skull. "That," he observed, "is the skull of one of Billy Bowlegs' men."

We were interested, but not specially surprised. For our caller was George Allan England, who is not only one of America's foremost fiction-writers, as you who have read his BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE stories are well aware, but is also authority itself in the lore of buried treasure. And now and then he puts theory into practice, leaves his summer home in New Hampshire or his winter residence on the Isle of Pines, and goes adventuring in search of hidden doubloons.



Photo by Bachrach

Thus far, it is true, Mr. England hasn't brought home the doubloons. He has, however, acquired an extraordinary knowledge of strange and little-known places from Yucatan to Labrador—places where Captain Kidd or Lafitte, Billy Bowlegs or Morgan or some other of that wild buccaneer crew are reputed to have harbored. And it is in the course of these travels that Mr. England obtains the material for those fine articles on seldom-visited places—Anticosti, Cozumel, the Dry Tortugas, the Magdalens, Sable Island and the like—which appear now and then in the *Saturday Evening Post*. So too the humorous tales which appear in the BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE (watch for "Bennington's Bar," in an early issue) likewise have their genesis in these unusual voyages.

Other talents besides those for buried (Please turn to page 6)

Big Pay Jobs for Trained RADIO Men

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Use This Coupon Before You Mislaid It

Blue Book Writers

(Continued from page 4)

treasure and fiction-writing distinguish George Allan England. He is an artist of no mean ability, a pioneer of the now famous *primitif* school who has occasionally illustrated his own books and magazine stories most ably.

He is, moreover, a linguist of exceptional attainments. He is familiar with many a quaint island patois; he knows fully as much about Spanish as the Spanish Academy itself. And some years ago his translations of that American classic "Yes, We Have No Bananas" were accepted as standard not only in many European countries, but in China as well. . . . A specially joyous comedy by Mr. England will appear in an early issue.

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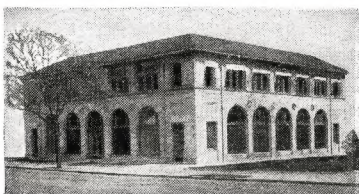
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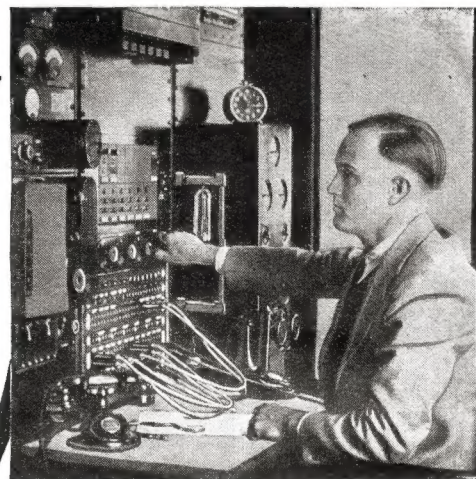
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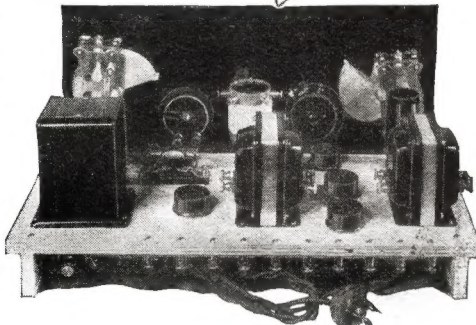
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Rope Rivals

By ARTHUR HAWTHORNE CARHART

Illustrated by Allen Moir Dean

AS young Jack Wright turned from the pamphlet-spotted counter in the high-ceiled office of the Cheyenne Frontier Days headquarters with a precious bit of paper in his hands, entitling him to enter the steer-roping contest, he bumped head-on into trouble.

"How come *you're* here, cowboy?" demanded the rangy man who stood with legs spraddled, blocking his way. "What's that paper you got in your paw, huh?"

Slowly, thoroughly, Jack Wright surveyed the man in the doorway. He was a bit older than Jack, wind-burned, and crowned by a light-colored "six-gallon" hat. His dark eyes snapped angrily under heavy dark brows. Around his neck was a flaming orange silk kerchief; his shirt was pink, black and green checked, and his fawn-colored pants were tucked inside the tops of boots that were etched with much stitching in fancy designs.

"That's none of your damn' business, Newt," snapped Jack, his own brown eyes flashing with quick anger.

"Cocky, as usual," observed Newt. "Look here, kid—as your older brother an' head of the ranch I've got a right to know what you-all is plottin'. Now come clean, Jack, or I'll have to slap you up to a peak."

"We're not on the T-Bar ranch now, Newt," answered Jack Wright angrily. "I'll let you be top hand out there, but long's you aint on the T-Bar, then I'll tell you again 'taint none of your damn' business why I'm here, what I'm doin', nor how I'm doin' it. Savvy?"

Newt Wright, familiarly known to the rodeo fraternity as "One-rope," because he never carried more than one lariat on his saddle when in a contest, suddenly reached out, laid a lean brown paw on Jack Wright's shoulder, yanked him into the hall, and dragged him to a dark corner. Since pugnacious old Tom Wright had met rangeland death after a cranky bull had gored him, Newt Wright had been both brother and father to young Jack. Now something was fermenting in the mind of Newt Wright besides fatherly or brotherly regard. Newt was irritated from his boot heels to the top of his big hat.

"You think you're goin' into this arena game, do you?" he demanded. "Well, let me tell you, kid, you're not. Go on back to nursin' doggies. Jest a-cause you've pulled down some dinky little prizes in the rodeo over to Log Cabin an' Walden you git the idee that you kin crash the big time, huh? Well, you cain't!"

"Why cain't I?" demanded Jack. As much of the old man's temper was in his soul and body as was in Newt's; both had inherited the fighting spirit of their scrappy sire.

For several moments Newt Wright looked steadily into Jack's eyes.

"I aint goin' to let you get tangled in this game," said Newt slowly.

"You stop me! Try it!" flared Jack. "What's the matter, Newt? You afraid you cain't stay in my class if I git in the ropin'? That it?"

"Nope," said Newt seriously. His high-tension anger

Frontier Days at Cheyenne: sports purely American and the utmost in hazard—steer-roping, bulldogging, riding outlaw broncos. And a story that is exciting indeed.

was partly in leash; he could talk without yelling, which was some control. "It's jest this, kid. I've followed this rodeo racket fer 'bout ten year now. It's like some

crazy disease. Gits in the blood—the crowd, the cheerin', the feel of a bad bronc between your knees. You cain't quit it once you're started. An' I aint goin' to let you git started."

"Cain't stop me!" blurted Jack Wright defiantly. "I kin rope with any of 'em. I'm entered in that ropin' contest, an' I'm goin' to perform."

"I'm goin' to see Luke Horne; the arena director, an' see that you're unentered an' that you don't perform," countered Newt.

"You cain't stop—" began Jack.

"The hell I cain't," flared Newt. "Watch! I'll not lend you a pony. An' you aint got one of your own here. What horse you got to ride, huh?"

"One of Jim Powell's."

"Oh! Well, I'll fix that. Jim'll listen to me. I'll see you git fixed about horses all right, all right!"

"If Jim Powell promised to give me a horse, I'll git one," countered Jack Wright. "If Jim Powell says I git a horse, I git a horse. He don't never go back on his word, Jim Powell don't!"

"Well, he'll listen to me, kid. You're practically out of the ropin' contest now. Better go an' git that entry fee back afore they decide they'll keep it fer keeps."

Newt Wright, filled with brotherly wrath, turned from Jack. He realized that the younger brother was past the time when he could be treated as a child. Jack had started to declare independence the day he turned twenty-one, but Newt had held to his position as boss of the range with stern hand. This, however, was open revolt.

"Yeh," jeered Jack as Newt turned away. "'Fraid if I go into the arena ag'in' you, you'll not be champeen; that's what's itchin' you! Go on, talk to Powell—talk to Horne. Try to stop me—try to!"

With resentment in his heart Jack Wright watched his brother go out of the high-walled hall of the frontier headquarters. "One-rope" Wright was among the top riders and ropers. No one was better. Only breaks of the swift-moving rodeo contests had kept One-rope from taking home the coveted Roosevelt trophy on at least two occasions. Deep under the resentment in Jack's heart was a hidden pride in this brother who had fought up to the top in this man's game. For years Jack had idolized the older man; had watched him at the T-Bar ranch when practice-time came; had copied his skill when Newt was not looking. And from the side-lines he had seen Newt come riding the wild, pitching demons that leap out of the chutes. Jack groaned when Newt was thrown, growled when he unluckily drew a horse that did not give him a chance to show his skill, howled crazily when Newt rode a wild one that hammered and swirled and plunged over the hard ground of the arena.



Bucking, plunging, pawing, Trigger threw every bit of live horse strength into the fight. Jack felt the queer sickening jerk which told him the steer was off its feet.

"I'll show that *hombre*," whispered Jack to himself now. "I'll show him! I got as much right to this game as he has."

He left headquarters, walked the holiday-decked streets of Cheyenne and found his way into the mob of performers in the Plains lobby. Here he listened to fragmentary talk, recognized rodeo celebrities and admired them from a distance. He assured himself that the slip of paper in his pocket, entering him in the roping contest, permitted him to join any of these groups and be a part of them, but he felt a queer shyness when he started to shove his way into a circle that was talking and joking boisterously.

Jack loafed back to headquarters. He had planned to find his brother after he had obtained that entry slip, lead up to the fact that he was in the roping contest, and get Newt's approval. He had sensed that Newt would object, but he had hoped to talk him into an agreement. That quick, angry clash had upset Jack more than he cared to admit. He had counted on Newt's backing. Now he had

to go into the arena in the face of his brother's disturbing antagonism.

Jack ambled aimlessly over the wood-floored porch, and back through the gloomy hall, into the rear room where nightly arguments at stud, monte, draw and other properly accredited pastimes were held. No one was there at this time of day. He loafed into the office for want of a better place to go.

"Hey, you, Jack Wright," called a voice. Jack turned to face Luke Horne, the tall, sandy-haired, blue-eyed arena director. "Say," said Horne in a friendly tone, "what's cross-ways between you and that older brother of yours?"

"Oh, he's on the prod about me bein' in the steer-ropin'," answered Jack.

"Yeh, I gathered that. Objects pretty strong. Tried to get me to get you thrown out. What's the idea?"

"Not sure," replied Jack. "Says he don't want me followin' this game. What did he say to you?"

"Same thing," said Horne. "He's threatenin' not to go on himself if I let you keep your place in the contest."

Jack Wright pondered a moment. Newt was boiling up within him. It might be all right for Newt to object, to bring pressure of argument and try to talk him out of breaking into the big-time rodeo. But Jack Wright resented thoroughly Newt's attempt to keep him from entering by persuading Horne to bar him.

"I may have to ask you to drop out if that brother of yours keeps on protestin'," suggested Horne. "You know he's quite a drawin'-card for the show, an' I can't afford to not have him perform."

Horne paused, searched Jack's face. He saw stubborn determination in every line.

"Well, we'll see," he said as he turned away. "If he don't say any more about it, we'll let it ride as is."

Jack went out of the headquarters office with a lust for assault and battery in his heart. If he had met Newt at that moment he would have forced him to battle. But instead of meeting Newt, he encountered eighteen-year-old Irma Powell, the blue-eyed, slim and lovely daughter of Jim Powell. The sight of Irma always sent Jack's heart hammering a skippy, jumpy sort of jig.

"Hello, cowboy," she greeted him. "You look like a high-country thunder-shower—all black and scowling! Cheer up, the celebration's just started."

Diffidence, a touch of awkward shyness, enveloped Jack Wright. Irma was a rodeo queen. Although they had known each other for years, Irma now belonged to that aristocracy composed of those who had their names printed opposite numbers in Frontier Days programs. The year before Jack had watched her from the bleachers as she went through her fancy riding events, had admired her trim, trig liteness while she had made a trick rope behave as though every fiber was alive. Jack had reserved a little corner away in his innermost heart where Irma was enthroned.

"Glad to see you, Irma," he said, shifting a little on his boot-heels. "We goin' to have some dances together?"

"Of course—but you're going to be one of the real performers this year, aren't you, Jack?" she countered. "Have to get your rest at night, so nerves and eyes will be steady, you know." She laughed.

"Who told you I was entered?" he demanded.

"I heard. Newt came tearin' into my dad for promisin' you a horse to ride in the ropin' contest. Newt seemed mighty peeved and pretty much on the warpath. What's the matter?"

"Newt's afraid to have me to buck," said Jack suddenly. "He knows I kin out-rope him, an' he's tryin' to keep me from appearin'."

"He was mighty mad. He cussed Dad."

"Newt gone now? Where's your dad?" asked Jack.

"Dad's at the Plains," she replied. "I don't know where Newt is. I'll see you at the arena tomorrow, Jack. *Adios*."

JACK WRIGHT hurried to the Plains. He sought Jim Powell, but Jim had gone. That night he inquired for Powell again and heard that Jim had driven back to his ranch west of Fort Collins and would not be in Cheyenne before midnight.

Night came. Crowds gathered at the carnival devices, played their nickels against a sure thing. Others bent over the back-room tables at headquarters and prayed devoutly and profanely to black spots on white cubes or dared the fortunes that waver as cards fall or are turned. Two dances offered entertainment for rhythm-hungry feet. Jack watched the crowd at one, then went to another; but he did not see Irma. He shouldered through the crowd in headquarters, watched a black-jack game for a time, then drifted back to the dance.

Almost as he entered he saw Irma swinging in the arms

of Jerry Logan, a champion bulldogger. He took a step forward, crowding through the little mob at the doorway. He would ask for a dance with Irma. . . .

Jack came suddenly face to face with Newt.

"Say, you cocky young squirt," snapped Newt, "what you been tellin' around here about me?"

"What you think I've been tellin'?" demanded Jack.

"Think you're smart, don't you, kid? Braggin' to Irma Powell that I'm afraid to go into the ropin' ag'in' you! Fine cocky bunch of talk fer a brat like you. I've a notion to spank your north end, here an' now."

"Fly at it!" snapped Jack Wright. "If you aint afraid of my ropin', why go to Powell an' try to git him to keep me from usin' one of his cow-horses? Why did you go to Horne an' squall like a coyote with the bellyache? You aint got the nerve to buck up ag'in' my ropin', you aint, Newt!"

"I've told you, Jack, I don't want you to git into this game," said Newt more calmly. One of the two had to hold to his temper and Newt realized it. "Listen, kid! It gits in your blood. Go back to the ranch an' be a cow-hand, an' keep on bein' a cowman the rest of your life—rope 'cause it's part of the day's work, not a-cause it's a contest! Listen to me, kid; I'm talkin' like a father." Newt's voice was filled with earnestness.

"Go yell in the wind," retorted Jack hotly. "Holler in a rain-barrel! You like to hear yourself talk, Newt. An' you're afraid I'll show you up in the ropin', that's all."

NEWT WRIGHT'S hand leaped—grasped Jack's shoulder. Quick anger had flamed at Jack's retort. There was an instant in which Jack braced himself to meet a smashing, driving attack, and then a second when they both stood battling to keep control so they would not race into mad fight.

Jack could see Newt's face, white, drawn, hard in its lines. He knew that the slightest hostile move would start slugging, smashing fists. The seconds ticked on; the dance ended; men came surging out through the door to catch a quick puff of cigarettes between dances.

The tension between them slackened. Newt was shoved close to Jack.

"I warn you, Jack," he said tensely. "You keep out of that arena if you know what's good fer you. I'm tired of this. I'm goin' to show you up fer a ringer—a scrub. Git me? I'm goin' to scoop you an' make a fool of you afore that crowd."

"You'll bust a hame-string doin' it," Jack taunted. Then, afraid to trust the possibility of another break, he elbowed his way through the laughing crowd, down the steps, and turned out to face the prairie. As he walked, new resentment at Newt went with him. Glowing underneath was that old loyalty, the old hero-worship he had held for this older brother. But on the surface he was as red-hot as fresh-ground chili.

He found open country, and lifted his face to the night breeze. A prairie owl flapped up in front of him. He trudged without thought of where he was going, his soul yearning for the peace of the unfenced cow country. Instinctively he avoided a shadowy spot where tumbleweed and yucca made a tangle of needle-pointed vegetation to trap the unwary. He stopped at the edge of a tiny limestone cañon. Far ahead a coyote yapped a song of wild loneliness. A bull at a ranch bawled desultorily. Jack realized that he had walked far. He turned back where city lights were a misty beacon at the edge of the great star-flecked dome of the unfathomed night sky.

As he faced toward the town Jack could see the long swinging filmy light fingers of beacons at the air-field. The twinkling lights of the city suggested a cluster of un-



Leaping like a frenzied wild thing, Manslaughter was pitching and bucking across the open space, Newt Wright riding like a demon.

tarnished stars that some genius of the night-time had gathered into a winking, blinking nest.

Jack dragged himself to bed, tossed, got up, and stood looking out of the window; then he went back to bed and at last to sleep. He had not found the peace he sought in that walk. He knew that Newt was out to break him one way or another. And in Newt's present frame of mind he would be ready to devise any trick to accomplish his purpose. For Jack Wright appreciated that his brother was ruthless—determined, a hard man.

It was the middle of the forenoon the next day when Jack found Jim Powell. The big rancher eyed him keenly.

"I told you you'd get a horse," he said sharply. "Aint that enough?" There was a hint of bluster in Powell's heavy voice.

"Reckon," agreed Jack. "But I knowed Newt had talked to you."

Jim Powell grunted. He hurried away as if he wanted to get away from further talk. Then he turned and came striding back. "Talked to Curley Bain last night about a hoss for you, Jack," he said, his eyes squinting.

"Curley's in the contest too. He's ridin' that buckskin of mine that I'd planned on lettin' you ride. Bain objects to lettin' anyone else ride him. But he's promised to have a hoss there in time for you. Better look him up out at the arena. That *bueno*?"

"*Bueno*," agreed Jack. Powell left him abruptly as though some disagreeable little task had been completed. . . .

The hurly-burly of the greatest outdoor show, "the daddy of them all," filled the arena at Frontier Park as Jack Wright lugged his own saddle with its rope coiled at the pommel from where he had piled out of an overcrowded taxi. He sniffed as though heady perfume filled the air. Balloon hawkers, popcorn vendors, the chugging of autos, the bawling of peddlers of pop, made a queer medley.

Jack Wright threw back his head. He was a part of it! He looked for Curley Bain, and saw him riding up on Powell's buckskin.

"Hi, Curley," Jack called. "Jim Powell said you had a horse fer me."

"Yep," said Curley. "Got one over in our bunch—right smart little horse too. I'll have him over here when the time comes fer ropin'."

"*Bueno*," agreed Jack. "Jest wanted to make sure. He's a good horse fer ropin'?" he asked casually.

"He's a bear-cat," agreed Curley. His eyes twinkled.

Jack drifted to the chutes where the amateur bucking contest was about to start. A horse came charging from the side delivery chute. Stiff-legged, grunting, jarring the man who rode him to the top of his head, the horse fought across the arena. The gun snapped. The pick-up man lifted the successful rider.

Another horse came out fighting. He clawed the air with vicious hoofs. His four stiff legs hammered the hard arena earth. The man swayed, bucked from the saddle. Dust fogged thickly. A clown with a mule that kicked followed and the laughter of the crowd in the stands came faintly across the open space.

Atop the judges' stand the electric announcer system belled the name of the next rider.

"Powder River Samson out of Chute Number Three, on Snowdrift," bawled the loud-speaker. "Powder River Samson on Snowdrift out of Number Three. Watch him come!"

A great white horse hurtled out. He began bucking with feet bunched, while his big body whirled and swayed. The rider pawed the air, clutched, and then the big gray streaked in quick swish-swashing jumps directly for the

stands. Samson, the rider, clutched for the pommel. The pick-up man carried the unlucky rider to safety.

Then a Burma steer slammed out of the chute, bawling, charging. He was a great spotted brute, rangy, evil-horned, mad with excitement. The man on his back clung desperately. The steer turned on the crowd, charging any living thing. Those around the chutes leaped to safety. The steer slammed into the plank fencing, whirled, charged at a man who had not got to the fence, careened into the boards again, threw the man on his back, started for him, bent on ripping this human pest to shreds. The rider leaped clear. A man on a horse came racing. The steer turned, charged the horse. Another rider came up. The steer turned to run, swirled to charge again, then dashed toward the far end of the arena where loose stock that had been in some event was herded until needed again.

"That longhorn's sort of proddy," remarked a dark-skinned cowhand sitting beside Jack Wright. "That Burma sorta wants to be a man-killer, don't he?"

"All entered in the roping contest over at the chutes at the south end of the arena," bawled the loud-speaker.

JACK piled off the fence. He walked to where he had left his saddle stacked with Powell's plunder.

"You're up third, Jack Wright," called Luke Horne, riding up on a great black that pranced. "Watch out, you fellows, we're goin' to turn loose some of the buckers, then cut loose a couple of you ropers, then cut loose some buckers again—keep things moving. So don't go ramming in there when there's a bronc' in action. Savvy?"

He turned and rode away.

"Tom Cameron in the roping contest," bellowed the big horns. "Tom Cameron roping. At the south end of the arena. Watch him come!"

A steer jumped free of the gate. Cameron's horse, fretting, teetering anxiously, ready to dive out when the barrier dropped, crowded up ready to go speeding after that steer. The rope barrier dropped. Every fiber alive, the horse shot after the steer. The rope whirled in the air. It settled over the steer's head. The next instant the rope had swept the feet from under the steer and Cameron was piling off his horse to hog-tie the kicking feet. It was a nice bit of roping. Cameron shot his hands in the air.

"Pretty neat," breathed a man at Jack's elbow. "Right good start. Looks like fast time. Wait until One-rope Wright gits through with that buckin' contest and comes over here. Then you'll see some fast rope work—regular chain lightnin'!"

"Tony Preebles out of Chute Number Five, folks, riding Cyclone," said the giant voice of the horns. "Watch him come!"

Twisting, swaying, plunging, fighting, the horse and rider came. Preebles rode him. The crowd murmured approval.

Jack turned to find Curley Bain. He met him coming with a horse on a hackamore.

"Here's your horse, Jack," he said shortly. "Right smart little nag."

Jack looked at the horse. Thoroughbred blood showed in his fine head, his slim legs—but mixed with that was renegade range blood. His eye was white at the rim.

"Reckon you should have had a chance to practice on him a little," remarked Curley Bain casually. "Doggone, seems like things git balled up though. We didn't git him out here ontill just about fifteen minutes ago."

"Oh, that's all right, if he's a range horse," remarked Jack. He had taken a fancy to the little animal, in spite of that quick-turning white in his eyes, the red in nostrils as he snorted. He looked like a mishandled animal; one that had been made nervous and vicious by some fool

bronc'-buster that did not know horse quality from four-legged lunkheaded dumbness.

"He's a range hoss," said Curley significantly. "Nothin' but."

The horse cringed as Jack threw the Navajo blanket on him, put on the saddle and adjusted it. He fought the bit as Jack pried it between his teeth; then he stood braced, quivering. Jack reached up to smooth his sleek neck.

Shoving her way through the crowd, pushing a good-natured cow-waddy aside in her haste, Irma Powell came running toward Jack.

"You can't ride that horse!" she cried breathlessly as she faced him. "Jack, that horse is Trigger—the worst outlaw on our ranch!"

"Trigger, the one that tried to kill—"

"Yes, the one that smashed Clark. You can't ride him. He goes crazy in the arena. They took him out of the outlaws to give you to ride. It's Newt Wright's doings, Jack. He's out to get even for your not giving in to him. Said he'd make a fool of you. You can't ride Trigger, I tell you. He'll throw you and kill you!"

Enveloping anger, burning, flaming, driving, flooded into Jack Wright. Something akin to hatred for his brother touched him at that instant. He turned on Curley Bain, but Bain was ducking from sight among the autos parked back of the fence. He had been a party to that bit of trickery. Newt Wright held a whip-hand over Bain and Powell because of a shady cattle deal, months back—it would wreck Powell and Bain if it ever came to light.

Jack whirled on Irma. "How did you find out?"

"Dad," she cried. "He told me to come here quick and warn you. Said he couldn't go through with it, even if Newt did break him. Said he'd feel like a murderer if Trigger should kill you. Dad couldn't come himself; Newt was watching him!"

FOR a second they stared into each other's eyes. Odd stillness seemed to settle over the arena an instant. The great voice of the announcer system filled it with abrupt thunder.

"One-rope Wright riding Manslaughter out of Chute Number Three," it boomed. "Out of Chute Number Three; One-rope Wright, last year's runner-up for champion, riding Manslaughter, the killer."

"You're next on the roping, Jack Wright," yelled the man in charge of the roping. "Get that horse of yours up here!"

Jack reached for the bridle of Trigger, who reared back a little, then came snorting.

"Jack, Jack, you can't ride him!" declared Irma, her voice low and tense. "He's tricky—a crazy horse, a bronc'. Part of the time he's right and the rest he's all wrong. He's a man-killer, I tell you—he's a fiend in an arena. He knows what's going on. He'll throw you and then cut you to pieces with his forefeet! If you care for me—"

Jack Wright's face was white. He started the horse toward the edge of the arena. He'd ride this bronc' and make him behave!

Reckless daring was drumming in his veins—a determination to straddle this horse, to fight through, no matter what happened. Jack Wright knew horses. He might handle this outlaw. Trigger snorted. Jack touched him again. The pony cringed, blew wind through his nostrils.

"If he should—" began Irma. "Jack!" she said desperately. "You can't ride him. I'll not let you!" She reached out to touch his arm. Something in the look about his eyes, the cold whiteness of his face, the set, hard look around his lips, sent stark fear racing through her.

They reached the edge of the crowd. Out in the arena there was desperate, stewing trouble.

"Jack Wright from the T-Bar ranch—the wild roper from Powder Valley! Watch him come!"



Leaping like a frenzied wild thing, Manslaughter was pitching, bucking, careening across the open space. Newt Wright was riding—riding like a demon. But his body was whipping on top of the horse as a rag flutters in a hurricane. His head was rocking, his loose arm flailing, while the giant horse that had smashed the bones of men, charged, slammed the ground with his great feet, plunged again, and whirled.

Like a whip cracking, the pistol barked. Newt Wright had ridden his allotted time. He clutched at the saddle pommel. Newt fury leaped into the big horse. He reared backward. He reached magnificent height, his shiny coat glinting in the sun; then slowly, staggering a little, he began to fall over backward.

With a twist, Newt Wright was free. He landed on his feet. Down came the horse. Newt leaped clear. But Manslaughter's hoofs were thrashing, clawing the air. One caught Newt on the shoulder, sent him sprawling; he rolled, tumbled, lay still.

With a scream of hate, the big horse dived toward him.

Some tense, voiceless prayer seemed to come surging out from the crowd. Flying from the side, a pick-up man threw the weight of his horse's body against the big fighting black. Newt Wright pawed clear. Manslaughter turned on the pick-up man with a squeal of rage. They went racing toward the far end of the arena. Newt Wright straightened up, limping slowly, painfully. He was shaken and bruised, but not broken; he was dizzy and bewildered.

Then there was the cutting cry of a woman lashed with terror and then a stillness as of death.

Thundering down the arena, loose from some corral at the far end, came the spotted Burma steer. He was mad for fight, crazy for killing, his long scimitar horns tossing.

He stopped, legs spraddled, as he caught sight of that one man in the center of the arena—Newt Wright, limping slowly back toward the chutes.

The spotted steer bellowed, pawed, then started on a straight little trot. Newt saw—tried to run—stumbled.

Unless help came there could be only one end.

Out from the point where those at the roping chutes watched, fascinated, burst the trim little bay Trigger. On him, rope in hand, swaying with every jump of that fiery animal under him, rode Jack Wright.

BACK of him Jack heard the quick scream of Irma Powell. He heard Curley Bain shouting a warning. Some great roar started in the stands at the side, died breathlessly.

Then unleashed fury broke beneath Jack as Trigger revolted. With every nerve of his body strumming, with his muscles taut as wires, Jack Wright clung to the horse. He yanked him to one side. They bolted crazily toward the steer. He pulled Trigger to head the mad Burma; then they were jerking and bucking again.

Jack felt himself leaving the saddle. He grabbed quickly. They raced ten jumps toward the steer. If Jack could keep Trigger headed that way he didn't care whether the horse bucked or not; he had to get within throwing distance.

Newt Wright dodged again, but a horn of the steer tumbled him. The steer turned, sighted the smashing, dashing, crazily jumping man and horse headed for him, hesitated an instant, then turned to finish his man-enemy he had helpless, on foot there in the open.

Under him, Jack Wright felt the living devil of the horse he rode; the man-hating, dynamic lust for killing. Trigger the renegade, a thoroughbred that had been mishandled

and made a man-killer, was trying to unseat him to trample him.

New yelling billowed out in the stands. Some one was shouting. Jack knew other horsemen would be coming soon—but he knew that they would be too late.

Like a log plunging in wild river rapids, Trigger humped and dived. But they were diving toward that vicious Burma steer.

Jack started to form a loop. Trigger swerved, ducked, bucked wildly, but jumped ahead. Jack swayed, clutched at the saddle, swayed again. Ahead, the steer made another charge at Newt Wright. But Newt was down now struggling to creep away from the quick death of those horns.

Only Jack Wright's superb horsemanship held him to the back of Trigger. Only his command of horseflesh kept the pitching outlaw headed toward the steer. They were swishing, side-whirling, turning, twisting, but still steadily careening toward the steer and man in the center of the arena. The loop swung dizzily overhead. It swayed and whipped as the horse dodged and bucked under him.

With every ounce of strength Jack Wright threw Trigger's head toward the steer. It was a matter of feet now. He must make that one cast sure. Trigger bucked away. Jack yanked his head back. It was too far to throw.

"Newt, Newt, jump this way!" he yelled with every ounce of strength in his lungs.

Newt Wright, hovering under the menace of those horns, stumbled and pawed toward that voice.

The steer leaped madly at him.

DIZZILY twisting, jerking, cutting curious patterns in the air, the rope went sailing. Jack Wright saw it hover, for what seemed hours, over the outstretched horns of that steer. He wondered if he had made a loop wide enough for that great spread of the Burma's horns. He saw the loop begin to settle—and in that instant he saw Newt Wright stumble and fall.

Instant eruption of crazy horseflesh jerked Jack's attention away from that nerve-racking instant. Trigger had been wild before; now he went both wild and mad.

Bucking, plunging, pawing, fighting with every little jerky plunge, Trigger threw every bit of live horse strength into the fight. Jack's head rocked. He felt the queer sickening jerk which told him that the steer was off his feet, yanked free by the lariat. But he could not tell if he had been that split-second soon enough to wrench those horns away from ripping into the vitals of Newt, tearing his body wide open.

The horse under Jack was a demon. Jack gritted his teeth and held on. Jarring, jerking, throwing him in the saddle as if he were jointless, pounding the breath out of him, jarring him from toes to teeth, every hop of the horse threatened to put the young rider on the ground.

Then came the queer jerk again which told that there had been slack in that stout lariat and that the wild steer at one end and the crazy horse at the other had taken up slack in one quick rush.

Jack reeled, clutched. There was another jerk, and the twisting pitch of the horse as the lariat tightened while the rope strummed. Trigger lost his feet. They were plunging, rolling, tumbling. Jack tried to leap free. Dust fogged up around him. He felt rather than saw the mad horse on the ground struggling an instant, and tried to fight clear. Trigger sprang to his feet with the quickness of a cat. He was after Jack now, tugging at the lariat. Jack dived away; but a thrashing leg hit him, knocked him rolling. For an instant he saw the crazy horse driving at him—Trigger was dragging the steer in his insane efforts to get at Jack. Some ragged, weaving form got between Jack and that crazy animal.

It was Newt Wright. He was hobbling, hopping on one leg, waving his hat and yelling.

Trigger swerved away from the fluttering menace of Newt's hat. Then he dived again, squealing, fighting mad, hoofs churning.

Newt Wright turned. With a desperate jerk he yanked Jack to his feet.

"Git!" he yelled, shoving Jack. Then he turned to face Trigger, hat waving, yelling, driving alone into the face of the crazy animal.

Jack Wright stumbled, turned, started back. Newt Wright, alone and crippled, could not face that horse.

He saw the thrashing legs of Trigger. He saw them slash into Newt Wright. He saw his brother fall as one leg crumpled when a hoof slammed into it.

The next instant Jack was pulling, tugging, lifting Newt in his arms, plunging away in a stumbling run, while back of him, scant inches away—struggling to get at the two—Trigger clawed and grunted, trying to pull the steer faster.

Flashing by, yelling, with ropes swinging, came riders streaking from the ends and side of the arena. Horses raced into the turmoil; ropes dropped on the necks of Trigger and the steer. Other men came trotting out to help Jack Wright as he staggered along with Newt in his arms. Newt's one leg hung limply, oddly. There was blood and dust on his face. His shoulder was ripped.

Some one tried to take him from Jack's arms. Jack shoved them aside, walked shakily toward the ambulance that had come clanging to the field.

Gently, tenderly, Jack lowered Newt to the stretcher. All of the old hero-love for this hard-riding brother had come surging back in that cluster of split seconds when they had battled for each other there in the dusty turmoil.

Slowly Newt's eyes opened; he looked up at Jack. His hand caught Jack's and tightened. He smiled a little.

"That was great ropin', kid," he said, "—great ropin'! Crazy hoss, crazy steer—but the loop dropped true. Any feller that kin win a buckin' match an' a ropin' contest to once is wastin' his time ranchin'. When I git patched up again I'm goin' to make you champeen cowboy of the world, kid—champeen!"

He closed his eyes, pressed his lips tightly, then opened them again. "I'm all right, Jack. Just a leg busted. You git back there to the ropin' contest an' take your place. You kin have my horse; tell Bain to give him to you. Go on, I tell you—do your part for the show!"

Jack Wright started to climb into the ambulance beside the stretcher. Newt raised on his elbow.

"Damn you, you ornery, contrary young son-of-a-gun!" he roared. "Won't you ever listen to me? How in hell kin I make you champeen if you quit the show a-cause some one else's got a leg busted? Git back there. Go on with that ropin' an' show 'em up, kid! Show 'em up!"

JACK watched the ambulance go through the gate. Then he turned determinedly to where he could see Irma Powell, Bain, Horne and the others around the roping chutes. Newt would hear that night that Jack had not thrown him down. There was nothing else to be done; he had to win.

He got his saddle, put it on Newt's horse. He turned from tightening the cinch to face Irma.

"Good luck, cowboy!" she said lightly; but there was a misty excitement in her eyes.

The voice of the announcer roared over the arena.

"Jack Wright, brother of One-rope Wright, ropin' a steer. Watch him! Out of the chute at the south end of the arena. Jack Wright from the T-Bar Ranch—the wild roper from Powder Valley! Maybe he's headed for a championship. Watch him come!"

The Hard-rock Man

A fine virile story of a real hard-rock man's achievement in a Missouri lead mine.

By CONRAD RICHTER

Illustrated by
L. R. Gustavson

BROADY IRWIN listened calmly. It had been the worst accident in the district that year. Except that his shots of tobacco-juice to the box of sand were more frequent, no one could have told that the superintendent of the Washington lead mine was interested.

"All right," he nodded tersely when the other had finished. "I'll be over soon as I run home and change my clothes."

Egner, the unfortunate superintendent of the neighboring mine, hesitated in the office doorway.

"I wouldn't tell your mother, Broady. She might not—"

"The hell she wouldn't!" roared the thick-shouldered fellow at the desk, and Egner hastily departed in the rain.

Broady had given a brief order or two to Hemphill, the timekeeper, when a second caller entered the little office. Broady looked up at him with irritation. Why the sam-hill did Stevens, the general superintendent from the St. Joe offices, have to come around the place today?

"Put on your hat, Broady," he greeted with irony. Broady's hat was seldom off his head in the office. "I'll run you downtown. The old man wants to see you."

"He won't see me today," returned Broady shortly. "I'm going to be busy."

The general superintendent appeared a trifle annoyed.

"Get this, Broady! Mr. Fleig is at the Bolton House. He has a cold, or he'd be out here in the rain. He wants to see you."

"Tell him to see a doctor," said Broady. "I've got no time for him today."

Hemphill hid his face behind his ledger. Stevens had flushed and stiffened.

"You'll go too far one of these days, young man!"

"Listen, big boy!" said Broady calmly. "The Gilhooly mine's had some trouble. Maybe you heard about it. Two hundred and fifty feet of roof fell in. When the night-shift got to the shaft, they found six was missing. Egner can't handle powder, and they want me to come over and blow them out."

"They want *you* to!" snorted the general superintendent. "Since when did Missouri Mines Incorporated, own the Gilhooly outfit?"

"I know all that." Broady brushed at him like a tire-some mosquito. "They aint paying me no salary. This is something special."

"Yes?" asked the general superintendent sarcastically.



"Do you want me to let those six men stay under the rock while I chin with the old man?"

"And Mr. Fleig's trip down here—that isn't anything special!"

"What do you want me to do?" demanded Broady. "Let those six men stay under the rock while I chin with the old man?"

"They're dead, anyway."

"Sure, they're dead! But their womenfolks will be half crazy till they get them out."

"Why don't they get them out themselves?"

Broady surveyed the general superintendent with disgust.

"Be yourself, big boy! You've been in the mining business long enough to know that when two hundred feet of rock comes down, it plays hell with better men than you. Why, the air compression knocked some of the boys ten feet! Egner says he won't be able to get one of the crazy idiots to ride the shaft for a week!"

"And you're going down in that dangerous place like a damn' fool, shoot off more dynamite and bring more roof down!"

"How in blazes do you expect me to get them out from under that rock—with a dust-pan?"

Stevens' eyes flashed.

"Where's their ground boss? Why doesn't he do their dirty work?"

Broady's jaw hardened. His eyes took on a peculiar glint.

"Their ground boss happens to be one of the six that's missing. What's more, he was a better man than two of you put together. Now stop holding me up, or I'll break you in two and throw the pieces at you. You can tell Fleig if he can't see me some other time, he can see me in hell." With that, Broady Irwin slanted his shoulders so he could get them out of the doorway and left his superior to work off his official indignation on the timekeeper.

IT was eleven o'clock that night when Broady dragged himself into his house. He would not have troubled to put his car away this particular evening if it had been raining door-knobs. Half asleep, he swallowed the supper

his anxious mother had kept waiting on the back of the stove, and then tumbled into bed in his underwear. His mother came in later, covered him up and tiptoed softly out of the room. The tiptoeing was unnecessary. She couldn't have wakened him with a drum corps.

BETWEEN eight and nine next morning Broady appeared for breakfast.

"Mr. Stevens was here," announced Mother Irwin.

"He was, eh!" Broady took his time about spreading a hotcake with molasses.

"He said Mr. Fleig wanted to see you at eight o'clock this morning. At the Bolton House."

"So the old man waited!" reflected Broady. He ate six or seven more hotcakes mixed with fried eggs, and swallowed two cups of coffee. "Must be something up."

It was between nine and ten when he knocked on the door of No. 1 Bolton House. It was a big second-story corner room reserved for mine officials. Stevens opened the door.

"This your usual time to get to work in the morning?" the general superintendent inquired ironically.

"If it is," flashed Broady, halting, "what are you going to do about it?"

"Boys!" chided the president of the Missouri Mines, Inc., and Broady crossed the room to where he sat in a rocking-chair with a blanket about him.

"Hello, Mr. Fleig!" Broady held out his big fist. "When are you going to buy a muzzle for your Scotch terrier?"

Mr. Fleig shook hands dryly. He was a shrunken man with a parchment complexion. Broady had once remarked that if the old man would iron the wrinkles out of his face, he'd have enough face for two men. Nobody knew how old he was, but he knew men and mining. Also, he never let personal feelings interfere with profits. Broady suspected that was why he kept Stevens on the payroll. Despite his antagonizing ways, there was no better mining engineer in Missouri.

"You boys never get any older!" complained Mr. Fleig mildly. "How many shots did it take you to get those bodies?"

"Forty-three," said Broady. "Not counting the shots from a quart of whisky."

Mr. Fleig let that pass. He knew Broady seldom let himself drink.

"Have any help?"

"One fat Irishman. I got him to show me whereabouts the missing boys had been working. I had to grab him by the pants and drag him down the can. Then he fairly rang the ears off the hoisterman before I'd fired a shot. I had to ride the shaft with a mashed-up dead man in my arms six times."

"Tough going," said Fleig sympathetically, but his eyes openly admired the broad superintendent. "Irwin," he asked with conviction, "what do you say to giving yourself a promotion?"

Broady was a bit taken aback. His eyes could get nothing from the president's face, so he threw a sharp look at Stevens.

"I agree with Mr. Fleig," remarked the latter. "You have your faults, God knows, but you're worth trying out on a bigger job."

"And what's that?" Broady inquired with a flavor of sarcasm.

Stevens let his superior carry the ball.

"Down in the Fullerton Field," began the president, drawing his mouth into a familiar twist that denoted shrewd significance, "the Missouri Mines has an operation that ought to suit you. It can run more men right now than the Washington. The ground has three times the

possibilities. What's more,"—he drew the last out meaningfully,—"it means half again the salary for you."

Broady gazed coolly from one face to the other.

"What's the matter with it?" he asked.

"What do you mean?" bristled Stevens.

"You know what I mean," thundered Broady. "Why aren't you giving it to one of your college cronies? Why give it to a machine dummy like me?"

"I'll handle this, Steve," said Fleig quietly, lifting a hand of warning to his college-trained assistant.

"You're quite right," he admitted to Broady. "There's something the matter with it. That's why we've come for you."

"What's the name of it?" demanded Broady.

"The Betsy Fleig."

"That dirty hole!" Broady gazed at them with silent understanding. So that was why old Fleig himself had come down—why he had stayed over night! "I thought that place was closed down long ago. Why, the son of a gun is hoodooed. All I know about it would choke a book. The ore peters out. The air gets foul. The rock's treacherous as all hell. You got to crib everything. Even the cribbing's no good half the time. I remember nineteen men got buried there in a squeeze one day before Easter."

"Most of what you say is true," admitted old man Fleig calmly. "But we're down into hard rock now and don't need cribbing. Also, there's plenty of ore. All the water pockets prove it. If we can get a real man to overcome the prejudice against it, he'll have the biggest dividend-payer in Missouri."

Broady's lips had closed in a disdainful line.

"Go and find one," he decided briefly. "Not for me."

"You're not scared of it, are you?" taunted Stevens.

"I'm not scared to throw you through that window!" Broady bellowed, turning on him.

"I'm taking care of this, Steve," reminded Mr. Fleig. He looked up quietly at Broady.

"Why don't you want to take this, Irwin?"

"Why the hell should I? My mother owns her own property here. We know everybody in the town. The mine danged near runs itself. Why the samhill should I go down there and work my fool head off just to give you and the danged stockholders more money? You got too much now."

"We got a lot of our money tied up in the mine, Irwin!"

"Aint my money." Broady shrugged his huge shoulders. "Let her timber rot. Don't cost me anything."

THE president gave no sign of annoyance. He gazed at Broady. His eyes held a glint of shrewdness.

"You're our last chance, Irwin. They're all scared of it."

"So you asked everybody else before me!" Broady's lip curled, but his eyes held their first gleam of interest.

"Irwin," the president followed up quietly, "Steve tells me you aren't afraid of the devil."

"Talking about himself again," said Broady with cool disdain, but he knew he had started to weaken.

"This Betsy Fleig mine," went on the president, "is the most devilish hole a man ever dug in the ground. It's always scheming how to put something over on you. The minute you turn your back, it sticks a knife into you. It hates a miner like poison. No mining man ever licked it for a year straight. The chances are you can't. It will hate you from the day you come on the job, and kill you the first chance you give it. I really shouldn't let you go down there—"

"Hey! Lay off!" interrupted Broady. "Who do you think you're trying to get down there—another old woman? When are you crazy enough to want to start this new raise, Mr. Fleig?"



Broady, retreating with an appearance of weakness, met the overconfident rush with one heavy fist.

"Right away," declared the president. "The men haven't worked for two weeks."

Broady's eyes narrowed threateningly.

"You'll back me to the last limit?"

"Absolutely."

"You're on," said Broady. "But you got to keep this Scotch terrier from yapping around my legs."

The president threw off his blanket and grasped Broady's hand. "I knew we could count on you, Irwin! Come as soon as you can. Your mother can live at Lost Creek if she doesn't like it at the mine."

Broady went the second day. His mother, however, he let stay at home. No use taking her where she would hear a pack of lies about his mine. He ate lunch in the hotel at Lost Creek and soon afterward arrived at his new charge. The mine and cluster of houses were typical of southwestern Missouri. The mill and small office had been painted yellow. Two white piles of limestone tailings were the biggest hills in sight.

A small group of men stood near the office. They were not dressed for work. They watched Broady's burly figure as he strode over.

"Hello, boys," he said. "What the samhill are you standing around here for? This aint Christmas or the Fourth of July!"

The men grinned. Broady had a way with him.

"We're waiting for our pay," spoke up a young miner.

"You'll wait a hell of a long time," informed Broady. "The mining company would be a fool to pay you now. You'd skin out of here like a rabbit out of a brush-pile."

"The place is hoodooed!" declared the young miner. "Let them have their hoodooed mine. I'm going to get me a good one."

"Me too! And me!" seconded the group.

Broady gazed at them with open contempt. His eyes picked out a brawny, thick-chested fellow standing a foot above the others. His face and mustache were the color of a Pike County barn.

"Aint you the credit to old Ireland, though!" Broady derided. "A big red-haired bozo like you scared of your

grandmother's shadow!"

The color of the big miner deepened.

"Say, you can't talk to me like that!" He pushed his staring companions aside and stamped in front of Broady.

"I can't!" ejaculated Broady. "Say, big boy, I can talk to you all night and can't unload half of what you aint. You big yellow—"

The giant had been sucking in his breath savagely. Now he leaped on Broady with a murderous grunt. Broady met him with cold disdain.

After twenty or thirty seconds, the cold disdain vanished, and Broady was looking downright interested. The big Irishman could fight. He no more minded a poke on the jawbone than did a mule. Broady decided he would need all he had for this fellow. Retreating with an appearance of weakness, he met the overconfident rush with one heavy fist. Every pound of muscle had been thrown behind it. The big miner stopped like a bull under a sledge-hammer.

"Get back from him, you mine rats!" ordered Broady. For a minute he was afraid he might have hurt the giant. Then the blue eyes above the bristling red mustache opened. The miner struggled to his unsteady legs. For a moment Broady thought he would have to do it all over again.

"Say, who are you?" the miner demanded.

"Me?" returned Broady innocently. "I'm the new superintendent."

There were muttered exclamations from the watching men. Broady turned to them jovially.

"You boys can get your slicker hats and buckets ready tonight. We're starting work tomorrow at seven." He turned to the red-headed giant who still eyed him savagely. "What's your name?"

"John McGinnis."

"Well, John McGinnis," informed Broady, "you're the new ground boss."

"But—"

"Don't butt your head against me!" retorted Broady. "If you aint scared of me, you aint scared of this cross-eyed, pot-bellied hole of a half-baked mine. I'll be under ground with you the first couple of weeks and get you going strong. All you need now is, get your day shift on the job tomorrow morning."

John McGinnis nodded bewilderedly.

"Now," said Broady, "what's wrong with this blamed place anyway? You and me are going to fix it pronto!"

"There's nothing wrong," said McGinnis, "that you can fix."

"What the samhill do you mean?" bellowed Broady.

"That's just what I mean." McGinnis stubbornly held his ground. "You can doctor a sick man, but you can't a crazy man. This mine's crazy. You can't argue with it. It's out of its head—"

"So are you!" snapped Broady. "And I'm crazy as you are, to listen to your squawking."

"That's the way they all talk when they first come," said McGinnis patiently. "You'll find out if you stay here."

"Stay here!" thundered Broady. "Why, you copper-plated mick, I'm going to stay here till hell freezes over!"

McGinnis glanced doubtfully at the group of men who had been silently listening. Broady looked them over with anger.

"Listen, you! I'm going to nail up right now the head rule of this mine. Lay off knocking her! Lay off talking about her being crazy and hoodooed. This here's as good a mine as any man around here, and I'll knock the teeth out of the man who says she isn't! If you don't have any teeth, I'll split you wide open! Now laugh that off. And nobody gets back pay till they put in two weeks on the job!"

In a month Broady had sixty-five men underground. The mine hummed like a steel battleship with every riveter hammering. Regular as a heartbeat, the can brought up its loads of rock and ore. The mill shook the ground with its constant crushing and shaking. Morning, noon, night and midnight came ribald roars from the doghouse as the men changed clothes or ate their basketed lunches left above ground to prevent chemical poisoning. Underground the huge drilling machines vibrated like great burrowing locusts. Broady himself splashed about from one to the other, McGinnis at his heels. The men had never had a superintendent before who did not lord it over them with boots and slicker. Here was a new kind of head boss with no more protection from the wet than their own shirt-sleeves and hobnailed shoes.

Then one innocent morning, McGinnis reported that a car had hopped the switch and broken the leg of the shoveler pushing it. McGinnis added that the shoveler was lazy and would enjoy lying in bed till his bones spliced up, but it wasn't a good sign. It showed that the mine was up to her old tricks. There was no telling what she would pull off next. Broady told him to chase himself around the mill, but he noticed that the sounds of revelry from the doghouse were less hilarious that evening.

Exactly two days later a rock bounced into the gears of the crusher, putting the mill out of business until new gears could be brought by fast truck from the nearest supply house. The following week Broady woke up to the fact that the mine had been losing considerable ore. His mercilessly poking fingers found that the screen jackets on the jigs had become mysteriously worn. It was necessary to shut down again until new screen jackets could be installed.

So far Broady had not batted an eyelash. The evil genii of the mine might play all the high jinks they wanted so long as they stayed on top of the ground. The first day of the new month, the scene of trouble changed, and it changed Broady's disposition. An explosion in the face took off several of the powder monkey's fingers while engaged in the harmless pastime of thawing out dynamite. It was evident that a stick or two of high test powder had become mixed with the standard grade

used by the Betsy Fleig. But how did it get in there, the miners asked themselves in low voices, not expecting any answer. Their nerves had begun to get jumpy, and the condition wasn't helped any by the friction blocks on the hoisting machinery getting smeared with oil. The blocks had to be taken out, dried and sandpapered while the men waited impatiently underground. For the first time since Broady's arrival, a knot of women collected nervously around the top of the shaft.

The red mustache of McGinnis drooped gloomily.

"She's just starting," he predicted. "Trying you with easy ones first."

"Lay off, you pie-faced undertaker!" warned Broady, "or I'll give you something to be mornful about!"

The run of trouble kept up, nevertheless. It was almost supernatural.

For two weeks hand running, the can unhooked itself in the shaft and plunged through the loading platform into the sump. The hooker, thoroughly scared, swore he had hooked the tub tighter than a railroad coupling. Some unknown power must have unhooked it a hundred and fifty feet from human hands. The third week was serene, but eventually a heavy boulder shimmied out of the can and killed the tub hooker in his tracks. From that day on even Broady could hear that the shouts from the doghouse had gone and in their stead reigned an ominous silence.

Like a killer that follows its adversary's weakness with its swiftest blow, the mine struck at Broady the day before Christmas. Broady heard from his office the frantic rings of the hoistman's bell.

"What the hell's going on down there, Jake?" he demanded, striding over to the shaft.

The old hoistman was white.

"Must have been a fall of rock!" he called back. "The wind blew up out of the shaft like a Texas cyclone!"

"Take me down," said Broady briefly. "And don't hoist the can till you get my signal—three bells three times! Unless," he added grimly, "you want mass said over you Sunday."

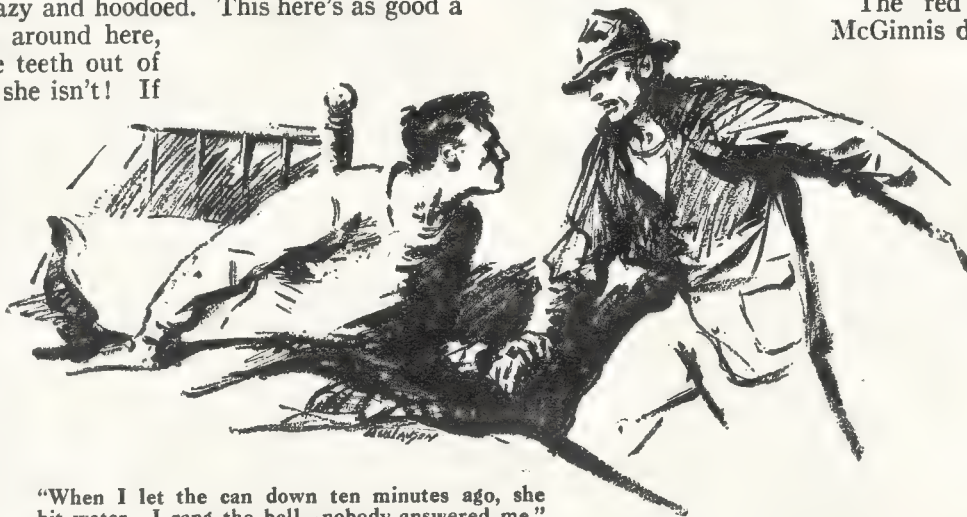
A bedlam of panic-stricken men met him at the bottom of the shaft. They fought to get in the can.

"Back, you lousy scum!" said Broady. Straddling out, he gave several of the foremost strugglers pushes on the jaw that staggered the men behind them. "Lay off, I tell you! What the samhill do you take this for—a five- and ten-cent store? Get back there, you fat Dutchman, or I'll cut up your belly and feed it to the prairie dogs."

The men came to rest reluctantly. Their wild eyes rolled whitely at the can. They were like frantic men at sea all trying to crowd into the lone lifeboat. Broady observed them with a threatening projection of his jaw.

"Forget about that can!" he told them. "I told Jake not to raise it for an hour if all hell broke loose down here."

"But, Mr. Irwin!" protested a white-faced miner. "We've had a cave-in!"



"When I let the can down ten minutes ago, she hit water. I rang the bell—nobody answered me."

"What about it?" roared Broady. "First time you heard of a cave-in? Why, you lousy ground rats, since you was knee high to a snapping turtle, you knew there was cave-ins in mines! Why the hell are you kicking about one now?"

The men's glances ran to each other.

"Now come on!" said Broady. "Let's start cleaning up this present Santy Claus left us."

FOR a week Broady practically lived underground. Scarcely a man excepting McGinnis would have gone down without him. The fall had been an ugly one. Starting with almost tissue-paper thinness at one end, the slab had deepened to half the thickness of the face at the other. Four men had been caught beneath it. For the week Broady got little or no sleep except for a few minutes on the desk in his office when he came up for meals. One noon as he was nodding over the bucket on his desk, Stevens opened the door.

"I've been reading your telephone reports to the old man!" he greeted enthusiastically. "He's tickled as a kid with an all-day sucker. He thinks we got her licked now."

Broady looked at him with a curious expression. "We, eh?" he repeated to himself.

"How about getting a little work out of the other end of that 'we'?" he inquired aloud. "I could use a little sleep."

"The old man's expecting me back," declared Stevens hastily. "Besides, what's the matter with your ground boss?"

"Mack aint hardboiled and sassy enough," Broady told him. "Now you're different. You can handle the English language like a foreign piano-player. Of course, if you're scared of this hoodoo business—"

"Who said I was scared?" snapped Stevens. He hesitated. "I might take charge of underground for a few hours. I think I have boots and slicker in the car."

"Am I dreaming?" exclaimed Broady with delight.

"You go and do some," retorted the general superintendent. "I'll keep those machines buzzing like horseflies."

Broady had returned to the Cassidy boarding-house, taken a bath and had sunk into a deep luxurious oblivion for six or seven hours when a pounding at the door of his room roused him.

"Go to the devil!" he muttered. Turning, he relaxed again into his heavenly state of bliss.

The next thing he remembered, a timid hand was shaking his huge frame, and he was looking up into the pale face of Olly Westerfield, the night hoisterman. He sat up abruptly.

"Now what's that hellcat of a workings turned loose?"

"I don't know," chattered Olly. "When I let the can down about ten minutes ago, she hit water. I rang the bell for the tub hooker and then for Mr. Stevens. Nobody answered me."

A glance at the night hoisterman's white face told him he was telling the truth. Broady leaped out of bed and pulled on his pants. Tim Cassidy and his wife, in night clothes, were waiting fearfully in the hall.

"What's the matter, Mr. Irwin?" Tim stammered.

"Olly lost a pants button," Broady snapped as he brushed by. "He wants me to help him look for it." A moment or two later both men were running down the dim road for the lighted mill that marked the shaft.

With the can partly loaded with handy boulders, Broady rode it down the dark shaft. Instead of "knocking the bottom out from under her," the hoisterman cautiously brought it to a stop at Broady's signal. Broady leaned out with his lamp. Water! Hell's bells! He couldn't see the loading platform for water. It stood all over the great pillared room fourteen to fifteen feet deep. He could

gauge the depth by the airspace below the ceiling. He might have been gazing on a vast subterranean sea, dark, silent, long forgotten of God and man. There was no sign of life anywhere. Broady choked back the emotions that tried to rise in him.

"Hey, boys!" he tried shouting in a stentorian voice that only partly concealed the feelings beneath. The sudden call echoed for a moment between water and rocky ceiling. Then from somewhere across the inky water answered an eager chorus. Broady's clutching fingers nearly bent the edge of the iron can.

"Where the hell are you at?" he bellowed.

"Up on the east heading!" came back the voices.

Broady thankfully remembered the east heading. The breast had been so thick that it had to be cut in layers. The men were evidently on the ledge of the upper layer. That would be several feet above the water line.

"Who all you got with you?" he shouted.

Only one voice answered this time. He recognized it as Stevens. The general superintendent had evidently exerted his authority.

"All hands safe!" he sang dramatically.

"Hey? Stevens!" shouted back Broady, overjoyed. "Where are those machines you were going to keep buzzing like flies?"

"Go to the devil!" came back the general superintendent. "I don't hear your pumps working either."

"You will!" promised Broady with a bellow. In two minutes he was back on top of the ground. As he had surmised, a group of shivering men and women had already gathered fearfully by the shaft.

"Every mother's son kicking like a steer!" he told them joyfully. "You couldn't drown those sons of guns with a Noah's flood. Now go home, you lucky dogs, and call out the day shift. We're going to make rafts and get pipe ready. The ground rat who isn't here by three o'clock gets his pants kicked down the shaft!" Broady hurried to the office and attached himself to the long-distance telephone.

The big ten-inch centrifugal pumps arrived about daylight. Long before noon they were throwing veritable small rivers of ten thousand gallons a minute each. Before evening of the second day the men were able to wade through the receding tide and ride aloft to food and daylight.

"Where'd that water come from?" Broady demanded of McGinnis, the last to come out.

"Dan Shrum blew out a water-pocket!" the big Irishman told him. "The water came busting out of there like a cat out of hell."

"The devil you say!" said Broady, and went down immediately to see for himself. He found Dan Shrum's last breast hole without trouble. A half-inch flow of water still trickled down. Crawling through the jagged break, Broady found himself to his astonishment on the edge of the biggest water-pocket he had ever seen. By the light of his reflector, it looked like a small lake.

STEVENS had had food and coffee, but he frowned grumpily when Broady told him.

"You're using a dickens of a lot of pipe!" he complained. "This mine is getting to be an expensive proposition."

"I should worry. I didn't wish myself in it," returned Broady, and ordered more pipe. The tireless spiders in the big pumps had sucked greedily at the underground pocket for three or four hours when McGinnis ducked his head at the office door.

"Something funny about that water-pocket," he puzzled.

Broady looked up from his desk. Stevens, who had been talking with his wife over long distance, said good-by and hung up.

"We pumped out half the Pacific Ocean," McGinnis went on, "and she won't go down an inch."

Stevens looked at Broady. The latter spoke swiftly.

"Get Bortz to make me a flat-bottom boat. It's got to be the right size to go through that breast hole. Tell him I want it before next Christmas!"

With a lamp in his hand and McGinnis wielding a rude pine paddle, Broady pushed off from the rocky bank in the hastily constructed scow.

"Charon and a passenger crossing the inky waters of the River Styx!" called Stevens who was watching from the breast hole.

Broady knew nothing about Charon and but dimly of the River Styx. After circling the hard-rock shore, he estimated the pocket to occupy half an acre.

"Blamed if I can see why we can't pump this bathtub dry!" complained McGinnis.

"Maybe Mrs. Cassidy left the spigot running," suggested Broady. "Let's see how deep she is."

McGinnis slowly let out a pig of ore to which had been tied a coil of half-inch rope. Fifteen feet or more of rope had been let out when McGinnis gave a yell.

"Holy Mother! She's moving! She's pulling on me like a whale!" He looked up with bulging eyes at Broady. "No wonder we couldn't suck it dry!"

"And they call her a hoodooed mine!" remarked Broady. He spat into the black water. "If our face had been twenty foot lower instead of where it's at, Dan Shrum would have blowed himself and all you ground rats into the Gulf of Mexico!"

"What's the matter?" called Stevens from his hole.

"This aint no water-pocket!" bellowed McGinnis. "Down below it's a r'aring young river!"

STEVENS smiled cynically at Broady as the scow returned. "That's the finish of the Betsy Fleig!" he announced. "We're licked!"

"The hell we say!" remarked Broady sarcastically. There was a grim line around his chin, and he spat tobacco juice like a machine-gun all the way up to the office.

Ten days afterward a big car stopped gently in front of the yellow office. Stevens, followed by a small, dried-up man, stepped out.

"Hello, Irwin!" the old man greeted dryly. "Been lonesome down here?"

"Lonesome!" snorted Broady. "With all those lousy, jawbreaking geologists and professors? I pretty near drowned the lot for the good of Missouri."

"They were interested," smiled the president. "This underground stream is something to think about. Besides, I wanted their opinion."

"Now that you got it, what are you going to do with it?" commented Broady.

The old man hesitated. Stevens had no such scruples. "We're going to close down the mine!"

"Know any other bedtime stories?" asked Broady. "You couldn't close anything—including your own trap."

"Now, boys;" reprimanded Mr. Fleig. He turned to Broady soberly. "I'm sorry for you, Irwin. You've had nothing but hard luck since you got here. You took it all and asked for more. Up until two weeks ago I was firmly convinced that you were going to see this hoodooed mine licked. Now, we've had something put over on us. Nobody knows what crooked course that underground stream takes. You're liable to drill in it anywhere, and drown everybody. In any event, you'll have to keep the pumps running to keep the mine halfway dry. And when they get a heavy rain up the country, you'll have more water for a week or two than you can pump out. We seem to be licked, and we'd better be men and acknowledge it."

"I don't acknowledge nothing!" defied Broady. "This Scotch yapper in a white collar might get soused on a wash basin of water, but not me!"

"I don't see what you can do about it, Irwin!" complained the president, a trifle querulously.

"Didn't you get my report?" demanded Broady. "I told you about this Lost Creek up here. It drops in a hole at a place they call the Sinks. Never comes up again anywhere that they know. I figure on throwing a concrete breast across that creek above the Sinks, turn her due east, dig a ditch three miles to a big draw and run her south by Mayville."

"And what good will that do?" inquired Stevens.

"Nothing to a flat tire like you!" retorted Broady.

"Just a minute, Irwin," interrupted the president. "We received your report. That's one reason the geologists came down. I'm sorry to tell you they can't see much in your suggestion. They gave me half a dozen geologic reasons why the water in your mine can't be Lost Creek. The strata don't run that way."

"To hell with your geologists!" declared Broady. "I tell you if that water aint Lost Creek, I'll kiss your Scotch errand-boy on both cheeks in front of the whole works."

"Irwin," said Fleig earnestly, "I'd like to take the chance with you. But your job costs too much money for the risk it carries. We've got to get legal rights, then the concrete and excavating for three miles. Heavens, man, don't you have any idea what that will cost?"

Extraordinary red streaks like the arc of the rising sun had flushed slowly into Broady's face. He got up and pushed back his chair.

"I don't care what it costs. You know and I know that wherever the rock has water in this country, you find the most ore and the richest ore!"

"But—"

"I don't smoke no butts!" Broady stood like a bulldog with teeth bared. "You came up to the Washington and talked me into coming down here. You swore you'd stand back of me, and by Judas and the Twelve Apostles, I'm going to hold you to it!"

It was very quiet in the little office. The dried-up president looked at Broady severely, but there was an odd expression in his eyes.

"If you fall down on this, Irwin, you agree to give up the mine and let us close it down?"

"Yes, damn you!" said Broady. "But I'm going to see you in hell first!"

IT was spring when Fleig's car again came purring to the little yellow office shack of the superintendent of the Betsy Fleig. The parchment face of the old president seemed more shrunken than ever, but his eyes burned.

"Well, Irwin," he greeted, "are you ready for the show-down?"

"All set." Broady bit off the words. "I see you brought your Scotch yapper along." He wiggled his fingers at Stevens who had followed his chief into the office.

"I came down to get kissed on both cheeks in front of the day shift," grinned the general superintendent. It was plain he felt top man today.

"You'll rot in hell first," informed Broady.

"Boys!" chided Mr. Fleig. He looked at his watch. "Stop your fighting, and let's go down. That water was turned off at our new dam half an hour ago."

"Anybody else down?" queried Stevens innocently as they walked toward the shaft.

"You baby-faced liar!" exploded Broady. "You asked every half-cocked geologist and professor in Missouri down to see me get licked."

"No, Irwin, they asked us!" corrected Mr. Fleig. "This



McGinnis gave a yell. "She's moving—she's pulling on me like a whale!"
"No wonder we couldn't suck it dry!"

is quite an interesting job to the mining world. Didn't you see the write-ups we had in the Joplin and St. Joe papers?"

Broady hadn't. Down in the face, the trio splashed their way among the dim looming pillars. At Dan Shrum's now historic breast hole, a little crowd of men in rain-coats and rubbers had gathered. They greeted the owner and his general superintendent.

"Your miracle hasn't come off yet, Mr. Fleig!" contributed one genial gentleman with glasses. His amused glance fell on the burly outlines of Broady. "Is this the young Moses who's promised to dry up your Red Sea?"

Broady eyed him narrowly.

"No, I'm the whale," he spat. "If you know your onions, you'll cut out the wise-cracking. I might go and take you for Jonah."

There was a titter among the younger men. Broady moved alone into the breach and threw his light on the water. It had not dropped an inch. Grimly he dropped down on his heels there in the breast hole to wait for the black flood to subside.

It was nearly two hours later when Mr. Fleig touched his shoulder.

"Better call it a day, Irwin," he said not unkindly.

Broady gave a final glance at the stubborn stretch of inky water and rose stiffly. His legs were numb. He had to rub them before he could walk. Out in the face, he found that the geologists and professors had gone. Only Stevens, Mr. Fleig, McGinnis and himself remained.

When the car reached daylight, Mr. Fleig unhooked his arm from the cable and patted him on the back.

"Don't worry too much. We'll find a place for you somewhere in the organization."

"Save your trouble," returned Broady calmly. "I'm planning to stay right here."

Fleig and Stevens exchanged glances as they climbed out of the can.

"I thought that you said—" began the general superintendent.

Broady savagely took the words out of his mouth.

"If I didn't make good on this water stuff, I was licked? Well, I aint fell down yet—not by a damn' sight!"

"You haven't!" ejaculated Stevens. "Why, you stubborn, bone-headed—"

"Steve!" cautioned Mr. Fleig. He turned to Broady sternly.

"Irwin," he said, "I've always liked your spirit. That's why I backed you in this fool idea against the advice of Stevens and the geologists. I'm not crying over spilled milk, but I want you to understand that now we are done. If you can't see when you're licked, we'll have to do the seeing for you."

Broady's only answer was a contemptuous spat. The president moved to his car and set a foot on the running-board.

"Stevens will come down Friday to close this mine. I shall expect you to obey him to the letter!"

"Like hell I will!" said Broady.

"What do you mean?"

snapped Mr. Fleig. Turning swiftly, he now advanced on his superintendent. His shrunken body seemed to emit showers of sparks.

Broady stood his ground.

"I mean—" he began.

There was a shout from the direction of the mill, and McGinnis ran toward them from the shaft. His huge face was flushed more deeply than the shade of his bristling red mustache.

"Mr. Irwin!" he shouted at the top of his bull-like voice. "She's down!"

The president had turned sharply.

"What's down?"

"Come and see for yourselves, you cock-eyed sons of guns!" bellowed the happy Irishman.

In pairs the four men rode the can and then together peered through Dan Shrum's breast hole into the late water pocket. Below them yawned a huge vaulted chamber whose sides were still dripping moisture. On the floor trickled two or three inches of water. At either end of the great room, a black hole vanished into the rock.

"When Steve closes down the mine Friday," mentioned Broady sarcastically, "he can sell that hole to New York or Chicago for a subway."

"Now, Irwin, don't ride us too hard!" protested the president. "What I don't understand," he persisted, puzzled, "is how it took three hours for that water to get down when it's less than twenty miles to the Sinks."

"A matter of hydraulics, Mr. Fleig," put in Stevens glibly. "If the water had a clear field below, it would have drained off in perhaps half an hour. But the water below was draining slower because the pressure was being reduced from up above. You see we're within a hundred feet of sea-level down here."

Broady sniffed. The president turned to him.

"How were you so sure about it, Irwin? You don't know much more about hydraulics than I do."

"Hydraulics, your eye!" said Broady. "Mack and I found that outlet hole with a pole. We put an old screen from the mill down over it. Then I went up to the Sinks and threw some marked strips of cloth down the biggest hole. When some of that stuff came through in our screen, there was nothing to it. We had Lost Creek hung up by the tail!"

Sea Wolves

By CAPTAIN DINGLE

Illustrated by Ralph Nelson

HILARY BORDEN should have been happy, but was not. He had celebrated his twenty-fifth birthday just a month ago, and he had thought it a red-letter day, with reason. When he sailed into the port of Goa, on India's west coast, he was first mate of the barque *Yolanda* without any immediate prospect of command. Not that he was dissatisfied: to be chief officer of a fine big steel barque at twenty-five in these days was no mean achievement. Of course, a fellow wanted command; and sometimes skippers were tremendously long lived—and amazingly attached to their berths. But the unexpected had happened. On his birthday, when he had considered full honors done by supplying bottled beer all around for the saloon tiffin table, the Old Man failed to turn up. It seemed a slight.

It was no slight, however. The Old Man came aboard in high fettle late in the day, and announced that he had been offered and had accepted command of a coastwise steamer belonging to the biggest native firm in Goa: he had cabled the *Yolanda's* owners, and their reply was to the effect that Hilary Borden was to take over the command of the barque and load for Macao. It was a notable birthday.

Now here he was, in Macao, and instead of feeling the old world at his feet, he felt as if he had it on his shoulders. Actually, his sole trouble was inexperience. He had all the experience any man needed in mere seafaring; but this was a responsibility hitherto unknown. His firm had no agent in Macao, and he had conducted the ship's business himself. Since the days of supercargoes and traders, a shipmaster's experience with the actual business of cargoes and all the shore-end details had become less year by year. Here he had collected a sum of money in gold, for freight and cargo, big enough to bring the frown to his brow and rob his feet of buoyancy. If he could have deposited it in the bank, or sent home a draft, he would have been a proud young skipper. But orders were that he cruise the coast and load the ship for owners' account.

It was that money which made him oblivious to the beauties of his surroundings. The music close by in the Camoens Plaza left him cold; and he liked music more than the average sailor does—which says something.

He was due to sail in the early morning; and only two hours ago his chief officer, who ought to have been happy too, having just got promotion along with his youthful skipper, and being still younger, had almost tearfully announced the desertion of more than half of the fore-castle hands in a lump.

"Tell the police! The men have no money, Mr. Pellew. They'll all turn up at the police station," Borden had told the mate irritably, having troubles of his own. But only ten minutes ago Pellew came to him at the chandler's shop and reported failure. Now the mate was trying to drum up some hands along the waterfront.



Two punches dropped two river men, who leaped erect and came on with steel-armed fists. One of the bundles cried out again.

Borden left his seat and turned shipward. Scarcely noticing which way he went, following sailor's instinct, he turned a grimy corner. Something fell over his head, something ill-smelling and foul: it descended over shoulders and arms. Soft padding feet surrounded him. Hands of incredible strength yet almost tender in touch went over him. Then hands and feet were gone. Nothing prevented him struggling to his feet. He easily flung off the stifling burlap bag, and stood up. Even while glaring around for sign of his assailants, his hands appraised him of the emptiness of his pockets. Watch, wallet, small change, ruby tie-pin and gold clip—all gone. The watch was an expensive gold chronograph, presented to him by a foreign government in recognition of his gallantry in a bygone mid-ocean rescue.

He ran to the corner. He would have throttled the first man he met. He met nobody. But though darkness was all but complete by now, he believed he caught a glimpse of shadowy figures running far down by the sampan landing. He hauled his tie straight, felt in his pockets in a sort of last-hope fashion for the brass knuckles which were not there, and sprinted after the shadows.

Vaguely he was aware that the shadows had vanished among other shadows. He was at a dead end. Beside him were moored houseboats, and large sampans of pleasure. He had left behind the shabby, smelly craft of humble traders and ship-tenders. There were silken curtains at window and door of these craft. On one, ornately carved, junk-built, silent and suggestive of wealth, a single colored lantern hung at a light bamboo gangway. There was soft music too, as faint and as compelling as the subtle per-



This not-soon-for-gotten drama of the Orient and the sea is the work of a real sailor-man who knows well whereof he writes.

steel-armed fists. But one of the bundles had cried out again. It was no scream this time, but an angry threat aimed at the abductors, and there was courage in it as well as intriguing musical quality.

It takes quite a voice to intrigue while rather shrilly telling Chinese river ruffians a few home truths. Borden saw the knives coming; once he had handled a mutiny on a West Coast guano trader where knives were used; he saw that the bundles

were making a stout interference, that the two men still struggling with them made little progress, and he faced the armed men keenly. They came to him like cats. When within ten feet of him, they leaped.

He sidestepped one of them, tripped him and spilled him against the other. He had their knives before they fairly hit the ground, and in two bounds he overtook the abductors. Using the knife-hafts as hammers, he thumped them

each upon the temple, and they fell.

Now he could disentangle the bundles from their smothering wrappings, and he stood two young women upon their unsteady feet against the summerhouse. He saw that one had bound feet, the other had not. Then the men he had disarmed were after him, and he must treat them as he had served their mates. A knife held blade up, and the handle used as a hammer at the lower part of a hefty fist, makes a fine stunner.

There seemed to be voices near by. The city itself had voice enough just at the end of that narrow alley. The girls chattered excitedly, in Chinese and English indiscriminately, and Borden could make nothing of it.

"Where do you live?" he snapped. "I'll take you home. Can't you speak plain English, miss?" he addressed the girl with the unbound feet.

"Of course!" she retorted, with the sharpness of lingering panic bravely fought until then. A second flash of summer lightning shone upon the girls' faces, and Borden gasped. He had believed at first they were simply flower-boat girls who were running away, then that they perhaps had ventured out after sensation; now he dared not place them. The little Chinese girl was perhaps seventeen years old, dainty as a goldfinch, obviously of high degree. Her companion, she of the unbound feet, was twenty, perhaps, dainty in her way as the Chinese girl was in hers, but oh, how different! Here was breeding, pride, courage, and blood of his own race. A wisp of hair had escaped from her close hat. It was sheer golden silk—as vivid a contrast to the raven-wing glossy black of the little Chinese girl as the lightning flash to black night.

fume which emanated from the boat. "Wrong number!" grumbled Borden, again at a dead end.

He gave a glance, half-contemptuous, at the pleasure-craft, and started off on a new tack to continue the futile search after his looted possessions. He knew it was futile. He knew he ought to write it off a loss and get on board before his nerves got more raggedly frazzled. But he could not. He heard a scuffling behind a summerhouse sort of structure, and dived right in among it.

A flash of summer lightning made a picture of the river. He saw, clean-cut and graceful against the flash, the lofty spars of the *Yolanda*, and the stumpier derrick masts and funnel of a steamer. Between him and the scuffling sound a pool of water lay in the road, shining in the lightning-flash like a mirror, and he avoided a fall by leaping over it. Then the passing of the flash left him momentarily blinded, and he stumbled past the house into something which speedily sharpened his wits if not his eyesight.

A muffled scream was cut short. He made out, through the gloom, the mobbing shapes of four hulking river men, and two smaller, helpless shapes, from one of which the scream had issued. So intent were the men upon the job of bearing away the bundled shapes, that Borden was upon them, and had swung two wallops before his presence was well made apparent. Two punches that landed upon two unaccustomed chins dropped two river men who swiftly rolled away, leaped erect, and came on with two

"Come on! We'll be in trouble if we stay here," he urged. She told him where they lived, and he took an arm of each. The small bound feet of the Chinese lady were incapable of fast walking. They had not passed the last fallen ruffian when he moved, and turned over upon his elbow. Borden swore, knelt, and cold-bloodedly measured the man for a punch to the temple which effectually put him to sleep for an hour. Then he gathered up the girl, and they reached the street in a rush. Here were carriages, lights, life. In ten minutes he presented his charges at the door of an imposing dwelling beyond the Praya, and at once the awkwardness of the sailor overpowered him. He raised his hat, mumbled something about getting aboard, and would have incontinently fled before such grandeur; but the golden-haired one held his arm in a very efficient grip.

"Don't go, please," she whispered. "My employer will blame me if you go without letting him thank you. Here are servants now."

HE could not decline, for the door was open; four bowing houseboys and a quaint old nurse received the little one with bound feet. And through a quiet house of wonderful things Borden was taken in a daze, to stand at last before a vast ebony desk, beside which a most dignified Chinaman bowed low to him. Just once the Chinaman raised his eyes to meet Borden's; and they held such fire as the sailor had never yet seen in human face. The golden-haired one had flung her wraps off, and now spoke rapidly in Chinese, introducing the sailor and telling the service he had rendered. Then the little Chinese girl came tripping in on her bound feet, ran to her father's side, and from its security turned and smiled quaintly at Borden.

The bland, expressionless Celestial spoke rapidly to the golden-haired one, and she translated:

"Yung-Ming thanks you for your service, sir. He respects your bravery. You have saved his only daughter from abduction at the hands of his enemy Yuet-Sam. He wishes you to name any return he can make. There is no limit to his favor." Then, while he stared wide-eyed at her, puzzled at the stilted speech, and the formality of it, he saw an amused gleam in her own gray eyes, and she quickly added, in a natural tone:

"Don't mind the form, sir; the matter is genuine. As for me, you have saved me from the same rather terrible danger. I am Lily-Bud's governess—my name is Jean Danes. I thank you too, most sincerely. Now let me tell Yung-Ming what he can do for you."

Her eyes swept him from head to foot. It was easy to see that she was appraising him by his appearance, and that was pretty well dilapidated. He shook his head, and grinned.

"Thanks, Miss Danes, I need nothing. Glad I came along when I did. I look like this because I had a scrap with some toughs just before I fell in with your party. Really I'm master of the *Yolanda* barque, and sail in the morning bound for Amoy. If you'll be good enough to tell me the time, though,—I was cleaned by robbers of watch, wallet, and everything, to the fillings in my teeth,—I'll be on my way."

Yung-Ming listened to the girl's translation of the sailor's story with no more expression than before. When she stopped speaking, he clapped his hands, a servant brought in whisky and soda and ice, and Yung-Ming sent the man away with a sharply spoken word. Repeating his wish to reward in some manner this savior of his little one, and meeting the same decisive refusal to accept reward, the Chinaman pressed a drink upon Borden, and then escorted him to the gate, where a carriage waited.

And just before the carriage started for the ship, Jean Danes ran down the path, paying no attention to her employer, and offered Borden her hand through the curtain:

"Thank you again, Captain Borden. You may never know what you saved me from—but I assure you I know. Lily-Bud was scarcely in danger, really—but I was! I wish I could show my gratitude to better advantage."

"Why not let me write to you, then?" inquired Borden on a sudden impulse.

"Oh, will you?" she cried. "Please do! Address me care of the Consulate. Good-by, and oh, the very best of good luck!"

Borden sat back in the carriage, feeling somehow quite well paid. His losses? What of 'em? What was her name? Jean! That was a name for a sailor's sweetheart! Her eyes were blue, weren't they? Gray? Hadn't he always said—in his heart—he'd have no girl but a gray-eyed one? And such hair—

Something leaped onto the step of the carriage. There was no slowing. A shadow simply blotted out the vague lights of the side-street, and an arm was thrust at Borden. His dreams vanished. This was the third time in one night he'd had to fight footpads! This time he'd—

"All li'! Flen'!" grunted the shadow, warding off Borden's swift blow with ease. Something dropped into the seat; then the shadow was gone, and the carriage rolled serenely forward toward the wharf. And in the light of his own gangway lantern, Hilary Borden examined the something that had dropped into his seat out of a shadow in the dark.

"Set sail to my soul!" he stammered. He turned to look at the carriage-driver. The driver, paid in advance by Yung-Ming, was already halfway down the wharf. The gangway watchman, holding the lantern, saw his skipper stupidly, over and over again, as if he didn't know wealth when he saw it, counting up one watch, one wallet, one change purse, one ruby pin, one gold clip, two brass knuckle-dusters, and a pair of cuff links.

When the watchman next saw a shipmate awake, he told him that the Old Man had found a bundle of posh in a carriage, and stuck to it.

"Musta bin a millyun! Gould watches, an' rubies, an' wallets full o' dibs, strike me dead!"

BORDEN was so tickled at recovering his lost property that at first he thought nothing of the mystery of it. The mate came to him full of trouble, reporting total failure in his search for seamen.

"All I could get was river men—seven bad-looking babies they are too!"

"Do the best you can with 'em," returned Borden, and left the issue to the mate. What was a mate for, anyhow? He walked aft and sat on the wheel-gear casing; the twinkling lights along the peninsula illumined a picture that would not fade from his mind. Gray eyes, spun gold hair, moist lips that ever smiled, though they might quiver in scarce-mastered fear—ah, that was a girl for a sailor! He had never cared much about women. In a sailing ship there was but one man able to carry a wife to sea with him. But now he was that one man: and by the horns of Noah's cow, he had found the girl! He left the rail and began pacing the poop rapidly. There might be time yet to run back and— Well, hadn't old Yung-Ming protested he would go to any length to reward him for saving his Lily-Bud? Then let him simply release Jean from her contract, or whatever it was that governed a governess. Because Hilary Borden was fully a man, and perhaps a little because he was feeling his oats over recovering his trinkets, he had no thought of the girl's pos-

sible rejection of the honor he meant to offer her. . . . He pulled out his watch—and the mystery of its recovery hit him between the eyes.

"Darned queer the way you came back!" he muttered, as the watch chimed the quarter to his pressure on the stop. He stood at the poop ladder-head puzzling over the mystery. He heard the mate forward in the darkness having wordy warfare with somebody who sounded belligerent above all reason even on sailing night, and walked toward the sound, past the gangway, beyond the dark loom of the forward house and the foremast.

Vague figures moved in every shadow. The ship sat high in the water, flying light, empty; the tide was full; the wharf-lights threw no gleam over the high bulwarks. Two huddled shadows scurried up the gangway and shuffled forward. They must have seen Borden's bulky shape, and they dodged over and passed to the fore-castle by the other side. He reached the scene of the row: it was no murder, or battle, but simply the noisy river way of letting the white devil mate of a white devil ship know that he had "dam' firs'-chop sailorman" come aboard his ship.

A huddled figure sped up the gangway and aft by way of the saloon maindeck doors. A taller shape seemed to float aboard, so silent was he; and Borden, nearing the gangway, on his way back to the house of Yung-Ming, met that bland gentleman himself, right there aboard his ship.

"I was just coming to see you, to tell you there was a way in which you can show your appreciation of whatever small service I was able to render your daughter," Borden said hurriedly. And he never noticed, nor remembered until much later, that Yung-Ming answered him in very good English—Yung-Ming who had required an interpreter not an hour ago.

"I am again urging you to accept my help," said Yung-Ming in placid tones. "I have to go to Amoy. Let me go in your ship, Captain."

Borden, recalling all his uneasiness about the gold in his safe, forgot for the moment all about golden hair, gray eyes—all, in fact, about everything but his one unalterable decision that no Chinaman, or any other man except a well-recommended man of his own race whose credentials were above suspicion, should take passage in his ship until the last dollar, the last tael, the ultimate sovereign of that cargo money be turned into tonnage, and the coast of China left astern.

"Sorry; I don't take passengers," he answered rather curtly.

Yung-Ming shrugged slightly.

"It is of great importance. It will mean much to you."

"It means more to me to be without passengers this trip, sir. I wouldn't accept double passage-money from the President himself," Borden said determinedly.

"All li," said the Chinaman indifferently, falling into the pidgin of the river-men. "You cally freight, maybe?"

"What is it? We're all ready for sea. I've been waiting two weeks for cargo right at this wharf."

"I got thlee clates of pig, fo' Amoy side. You cally? Buyer will lob me suppose I no go, but—" Again Yung-Ming shrugged.

"I'll take 'em if you have 'em alongside within an hour."

"Can do. What-chee want ffrom me? You speak you go by my house."

"I want you to release Miss Danes from her engagement so that I may ask her to marry me and come to sea with me now," blurted the eager lover. And the placid Yung-Ming never shrugged this time, but answered:

"All li. I go see." And like the shadow he vanished. . . .

There was to be no turning in that night. Half an hour

after Yung-Ming departed, a sampan drifted alongside. The boat itself was as noiseless as the water of the river; the act of coming alongside made boat and river as

hideous as Bedlam. Huge crates of pigs, squealing and thumping; river men and sailors from the ship, cursing and squabbling about paint scars and catching ropes. Borden had been anxiously pacing the dim waist opposite the gangway, watching for the response to Yung-Ming's embassy. He walked toward the source of the uproar, at no loss for words to scrape down Mr. Pellew.

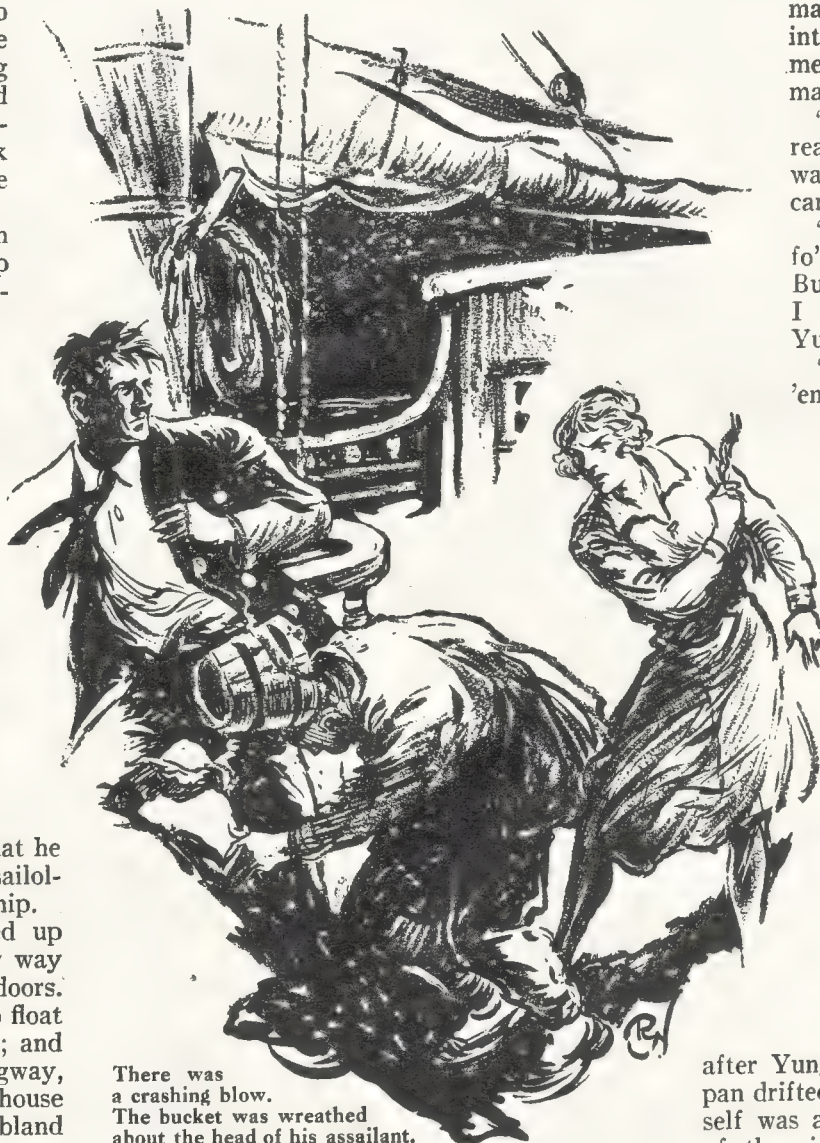
"Where's the mate? What's all this damned ruction?"

The second mate appeared, a bit flustered. There had been quite a squabble among his men, not a bit modified by the actions of the sampan-men.

"He's gone after two of the new hands, sir. They ducked down the gangway when the blessed hogs came alongside."

"Well, get up a yard-and-stay tackle and hoist in these crates," snapped Borden. "Set 'em on the main hatch and lash 'em down well."

"The sampan-men won't let our men handle the crates, sir," said the puzzled second mate.



There was a crashing blow. The bucket was wreathed about the head of his assailant.

"Then let the sampan-men handle the whole job, and be damned to them!" Borden returned angrily. What a climax to such a night! A girl all gray eyes and spun gold hair, a voice and a handclasp each as friendly as love itself, and now—a squabble over a lot of filthy pigs! He resumed his pacing of the maindeck. Pellew came aboard holding, with a hand on each, two derelict seamen. And Borden heard him tell the gangway watchman—one of the old hands—a few truths about letting another man across that gangway.

More uproar broke out at the main hatch. Borden heard a squeal that was not from pigs, and a splash; then he was in the midst of a frenzied huddle of men.

"One o' the sampan-men knifed one of our new hands, and they dumped him into the river," said Mr. Pellew, a bit bewildered at all the row. The three pig-crates were securely on the hatch; the loading seemed to be done. The sampan-men dropped back from the ship to their own craft, and in going, they managed somehow to capsize and drop into the river another of the *Yolanda's* new hands.

"That's two gone!" yelled the second mate with a curse. "What's got into the ship, anyhow?"

"All li'," purred a soft voice at Borden's ear, and the unbelievably powerful hand of Yung-Ming fastened upon his arm and drew him away from the noisy scene.

"All li'. I find two men fo' you. You sail soon, Captain. You no wait fo' mo'ning."

"What do you know about it?" demanded Borden angrily. "What's it all about? I've a damn' good mind to chuck your blessed pigs into the river. All the ruction is over them."

"No touble. Plenty riveh men make fight togetheh. You got men b'long otheh side my pig men. That's all. I got men fo' you."

The Chinaman clapped his hands softly, and back over the rail slipped two silent yellow men, agile as cats, to whom he spoke briefly in his own tongue. The men answered with a single word, and stood looking at Borden, waiting for his commands.

"These good men," said Yung-Ming. "They serve well the man who serve my Lily-Bud. You no 'fraid of them."

Lily-Bud's name brought Borden back to the pleasanter thoughts of early evening. He believed Yung-Ming. He accepted the men, called the mate, and turned them over to him, then in turn gripped the Chinaman's sleeve.

"What message did Miss Danes send?"

"Missy Danes no stop along my house. She take Lily-Bud to stop my sisteh's house while I go Amoy. She stop along too," Yung-Ming announced coolly.

"Your sister's house? Where is that?" stammered Borden. He had some wild notion of hurrying there and carrying off Jean Danes, will-she, nill-she.

"She Canton side," was the placid answer; and apparently dismissing the subject as of no concern: "You sail pletty quick? I go Amoy side by tlain, s'pose you no can do passage fo' me—"

Borden had been on the point of changing his mind and offering the man a passage, since he had accepted his cargo; there seemed little reason to refuse to take the man while taking his pigs. And on the short passage—Amoy was but little more than three hundred miles distant, and the monsoon was fair—Borden hoped to solidify his position with the Chinaman so that there could be no obstacle to his progress towards Jean Danes on the return which he meant to make. But he had a strong notion

that there was no train running between Macao and Amoy; if there was, he had never heard of it; and here was this pig-dealer who dwelt in a palace, who had mysterious powers over river ruffians, calmly stating that he must go to Amoy by train since he could not go in the *Yolanda*. And—it came like a lightning flash—there was that most mysterious recovery of his stolen valuables, not five minutes after quitting Yung-Ming's house, where alone he had mentioned his loss. Finally there was the matter of that freight money, still in his safe in his locked-up stateroom.

"Train's better for you," he said tersely. "Sorry I'm not permitted to take passengers. You give me the name of your agent, and I'll deliver the pigs to him if you're not there before me. But of course you will be—by train." He watched Yung-Ming closely as he said train.

"All li'," was the calm reply. "No botheh with agent. I meet you in Amoy. You sail quick, please. Goo' luck."

Yung-Ming was over the gangway and almost beyond reach before Borden leaped after him and caught his long coat.

"Where has Miss Danes gone? What address?" Borden suspected many things now. That Amoy train stuck in his gizzard. The departure of Jean for Canton might be another bit of imagery. The Chinaman turned without any more concern than he had showed in every other way.

"She tell you send letteh to consul. All li'. Much betteh."

Like a shadow he slipped from the skipper's hands and was gone.

"Wake up the tug skipper! We'll pull out at once!" snapped Borden, striding aboard and hailing the mate. Pellew was glad. That new crew of his gave him a handful just to keep them aboard. He was glad too that mishap or whatever might be had robbed him of two of the worst of the new hands; for the silent pair produced by Yung-Ming had already satisfied him of their worth. He jumped aboard the tug, which had been moored alongside since evening, and in five minutes the big funnel was roaring. In ten the tug moved up ahead, and the ship's lines had been singled up. Borden ran below and woke the pilot, lying dressed on the transom. . . .

The dawn was near when the *Yolanda* moved quietly down the harbor. Borden had cleared her the previous afternoon. There were no formalities. Her tug let go of her just as the sun came up, and she took up the rolling road under her own lofty canvas. The pilot departed with the tug; the second mate was left in charge, with a strong fair wind and a bright day, with Hongkong looming high over the port bow. The two men produced by Yung-Ming cleaned out the pig crates and fed the pigs, then spread canvas over all to ward off the mounting sun's rays.

Borden went to his room, shut the door behind him, and examined his safe before washing up for breakfast. His safe was intact. He twiddled the combination and satisfied himself of the safety of the gold. After all, he thought, life was going to be good. Now the ship was clear of that disquieting river—He lathered his face, hissing the tuneless rhythm of a song not entirely dissociated from the theme of love. It was difficult to whistle with a mouth berimmed with lather.

A knock came at the door—the mate's voice: "Have you got my room-key, sir? I don't remember locking it, but I can't get in—and I think somebody's inside."



"Inside your room? Rubbish!" Borden stopped hissing, because speaking alone blew lather all over his room. He looked at the row of hooks on which hung various keys.

"I haven't got your key, Pellew. Must be inside. You ought to leave that Macao wine alone. I'll get my pass-key—"

With lather brush in one hand, pass-key in the other, face all marbled with bumps of soapy froth, Captain Borden crossed the saloon and listened for a breath outside the mate's door. There was somebody in there. That was beyond question. It was somebody vastly interested in opening bureaus, and the desk. Borden flung the door wide; the mate reached forward to grab the intruder, and—

Jean Danes avoided his arms with the skill and speed of a crack hockey player and flung herself into those of Hilary Borden.

Her spun-gold hair was shampooed with the lather from his face. But she choked upon what she had to say, and her slim body quivered against his. She looked up into his face with wide eyes more pregnant of fear than he had seen them when her own peril was rampant; and she never noticed soap, brush, or lack of shirt in him. "Is he—is he here?" she blurted out. "Where is he? That *pyloong*!"

Borden laughed softly, brushing away bits of lather from her hair.

"What do you know about *pyloongs*?" he asked. "How did you get locked up here? Tell me that, and let's see what we can do about it. You shouldn't even know the meaning of the word *pyloong*. Steward! Hurry up with a cup of strong tea. Come to my room, Miss Jean. You'll need to tidy up a bit. *Pyloong*! That means *pirate*, little lady."

"I know! I know that, and he's the biggest of them all!" the girl cried angrily, following him to his roomy quarters. "I found it out by accident. I saw a man bring a bundle to Yung-Ming just as you were leaving; he opened it, and I saw a lot of things like those you said you were robbed of; I heard him send the man after your carriage with the bundle—"

"Wait a minute!" snapped Borden. "Let's shut the door until you've got the yarn spun." A colossal edifice of dire possibilities reared up before his mental vision. That mystery of the recovered valuables had not ceased to bother him. And Yung-Ming's persistence in trying to get a passage to Amoy took on a new significance now. The girl gratefully sipped hot tea, and some color crept into her tired face. She darted her glances at every corner, as if fearing some apparition. Borden's quarters were spacious, as Captains' apartments were in those fine old

clippers. A bathroom opened off the main cabin; a sleeping-room door stood open beside the bathroom door. Big round portholes lighted the place. A wide skylight over all let in more light and plenteous air.

"Yung-Ming tried hard to get a passage to Amoy, Miss Jean; but I refused to hear of it. He begged hard—said he must ship a load of pigs. I had a reason"—she missed his quick glance toward her—"for wanting to keep in with the old josses, so I agreed to take three crates of pigs to

Amoy for him—and I have them aboard now."

"Oh—pigs!" Jean Danes shrugged, and finished her tea.

"Yes; he said he'd go to Amoy by train."

"Is there any train? I suppose there must be. But it's a new departure for Yung-Ming to dabble in pigs, Captain Borden. He's the richest—" The girl stamped her foot passionately, snatched up a cigarette from his desk, and sat down on his settee, looking up at him through the smoke his match soon kindled, and then she poured the full tale over him like a torrent.

"Lily-Bud told me that her father is head of a firm of which Yuet-Sam is the other partner. Poor child! She doesn't know that the firm is simply a pirate

gang. It was Yuet-Sam who had nearly kidnaped Lily-Bud and me when you providentially came along—and Yuet-Sam's houseboat is notorious! Ugh! Many a white girl has vanished in Macao, and after a desultory search somebody says, 'Yuet-Sam's harem!' and that's the end of the hunt. I can't understand how Lily-Bud got mixed up in the stealing, though it doesn't matter now.

"Yung-Ming suddenly discovered he must go to Amoy last night. Nothing had ever been heard of pigs before. He ordered Lily-Bud's old nurse to prepare to go at once to his sister's house in Canton with us; and he put us in charge of his own body-servant, without whom he has never moved a hundred yards in the year I have been with the family.

"Lily-Bud refused to obey, and this time he seemed to know she meant it. She told him she was afraid to leave his house after her recent experience. He was not angry, but so earnest that he spoke more loudly than he need have—and I heard him mention gold in your ship!"

Borden was regarding the girl closely. She was obviously in a condition bordering upon nervous collapse; yet she did not seem, had not at any time in his experience seemed, of a nervous type. Flashing across his memory again came the thought of that gold in his safe. It was not her mention, either, that necessarily reminded him. The mate, too, was intently gazing at her. It was in his room she had been found; in his lockers and bureau she had been rummaging.

"You were rummaging—" the skipper began, and she laughed now, so close to hysteria that even a bachelor must recognize the symptoms.



Jean ran from the companionway, her pistol smoking.

"Oh, please don't waste time asking silly questions! I ran to you as quickly as I could after seeing Lily-Bud safely on her way. You put me under an obligation, and I did my best to make good on it, and now you ask me— Oh, I ran down here to find you. Yung-Ming was close behind me, I knew. I found nobody down here, and was going on deck when I heard Yung-Ming's voice! I ran into the first room I saw open, and shut the door. It locked, and I have tried to get out until I am almost crazy! Rummage? For a key to get out with!"

The girl stopped, her small fists clenched, her teeth biting hard on her red lower lip. She met Borden's eye with a gaze flashing with anger. The mate still regarded her queerly; Borden seemed midway between amusement and annoyance.

"You're to be looted off the Pescadores!" she cried, and the click of her teeth could be heard distinctly. She took another cigarette, lit it herself, and her face went ivory white. But she put on a great air of composure, and stared back at the two men.

Borden laughed. He nodded to Pellew, and dismissed him. Then he sat down opposite the girl and remarked quizzically:

"Yuet-Sam and Yung-Ming are partners, you say. Yuet-Sam tried to carry off you and your employer's daughter. You say Yung-Ming is to loot my ship. Yung-Ming brought me the only two decent sailors I have from Macao. Yung-Ming tried to buy a passage with me, and I refused him. If he is to loot me, and expected to do it by sailing in this ship, Miss Jean, doesn't it occur to you that he's rather made a flop of it? Come!"

Borden by now was feeling a bit more trouble-free than he had been. He could see that whatever plot might be cooking, was spoiled by his definite refusal to give Yung-Ming a passage to Amoy. And the mix-up had certainly brought Jean Danes aboard his ship, a delightful piece of luck which he had failed to bring to pass, and which Yung-Ming—supposing he had tried—had also failed to accomplish. Yung-Ming, truly, had seemed nonchalant, but so had he in all things—even to that Amoy passage.

"They were partners. Between them the China Coast has been made to stand up and beg! When Yuet-Sam wanted to marry Lily-Bud, they had their first quarrel. Yung-Ming wanted her to be a great lady without the shadow of a headless husband grinning at her bed-head. Yuet-Sam tried to put Lily-Bud and me into his houseboat. I know he meant to sell me Shanghai-side after a while. That's his habit. If I had been taken alone, Yung-Ming wouldn't have cared *that*!" She flicked ash from her cigarette, and it fell upon Borden's coat. She was angry. He watched her. She was lovely in rage; and in spite of his infatuation, he liked to see how angry she could get. Many men are like that. Most of them learn, later.

SHE saw his amusement, and all her rage fled. "Can't you turn back?" she said quietly.

"I don't see why I should," Borden said. "It seems to me we've crooked the game. Doesn't it to you?"

"No!" she snapped at him. "It means that you now have two parts of a broken partnership, each hungering after whatever gold there is in your ship!"

"Little lady,"—Borden smiled—"I believe you in every word. I believe Yung-Ming is a pirate. I know somebody tried to carry you off—where I don't know, but it was where you didn't want to go, and that's all I cared about. I sent Yung-Ming to release you from the contract you had with him, so that I could ask you to—"

"Beg pardon, sir!" a seaman came to the door. "The secon' mate say foun' a small sampan towin' 'longside rudder. He say you make look-see. . . ."

Borden was not a fool. He had satisfied himself that the immediate trouble was over, but was not so shut-up to influences that he could not smell a rat. He was at the taffrail in sixty seconds—and there wallowed a neat sampan, her painter not tied to the ship, but fouled about the chains of the rudder, as if she had been cast off, but had been entangled. Borden turned, to find Jean at his side.

"It's another sign!" she whispered. "Won't you turn back? You can make Hongkong!"

"Hongkong's to windward now, girlie. And besides, this seems to me to be a proof that the plot has flopped." He saw her eyes glaze, saw her totter.

"Hullo! Jean! Don't do that! Do you care so much as—"

"Care!" she cried. "After what you saved me from?"

BORDEN looked astern. Hongkong lay to windward. The monsoon blew with fresh force. The decks of the *Volanda* lay clean and peaceful. At one of the pig-crates a muscular yellow man hauled out a bale of hog-fodder and poked it through the slats of the other two crates. The cook was lugging a heavy bucket of galley garbage to the crates. Five of the new hands worked zealously under the second mate, paying down a mighty coir mooring hawser into the forepeak. The second of the men produced by Yung-Ming stood at the wheel, sphinxlike, rocklike, steering the flying clipper with a true helmsman's touch.

The mate and a couple of men had hooked a tackle to the fouled sampan and dragged it aboard. Somewhere out there ahead in the Formosa Channel were *pyloongs* waiting, if all the wild tales told were true. But the sun shone, the monsoon blew lustily and the bows were aglitter with spray; the sea sparkled as well as a dull sea can, and already Hongkong lay so far to windward that to reach it would take the rest of the day. When reached, Jean would surely go ashore; there must be a lot of silly inquiries; here were Yung-Ming's pigs, due for prompt delivery. Yung-Ming himself must be well on his way by now—even though Borden knew he had lied when he spoke of going to Amoy by train, and—

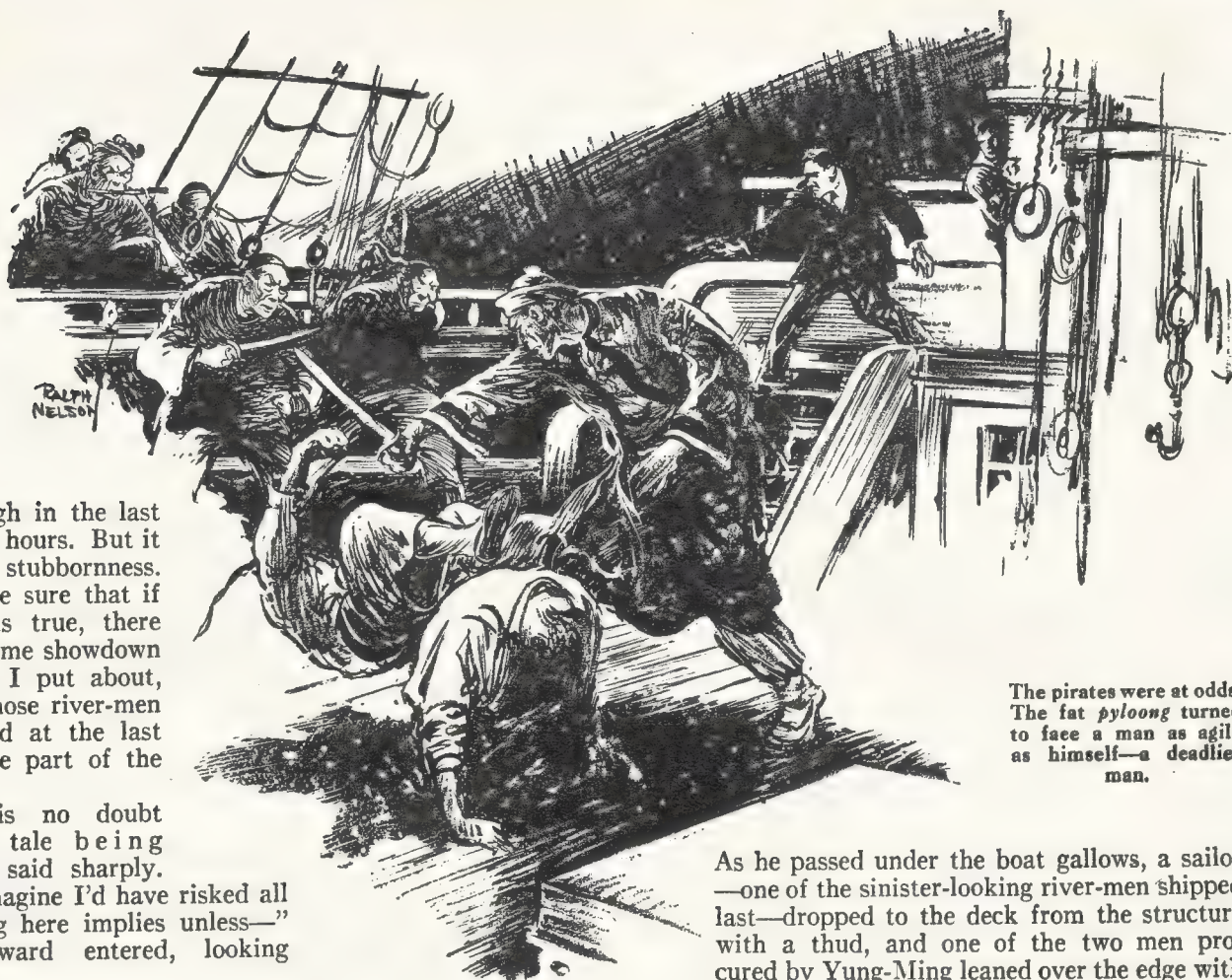
"We'll carry on," he decided. "Miss Jean, you can rest in my room. Consider it your own. I'll use the chart-room. Mr. Pellew, keep the men busy, and"—he waited until the mate's ear was closer—"keep a lookout with both eyes! There's no junk afloat that can overhaul this ship with this breeze. But just in case, you savvy? If any junk whatever stands athwart your course, sail straight through her!"

Borden went below at lunch-time and spruced himself up for table with unusual care. He expected to find Jean annoyed at his refusal to listen to her advice. Instead he found her already at the table, looking rested, smiling at him as if she really hadn't a care in the world except his personal comfort and happiness. It gave him a pleasurable shock. If this was what a married sea-captain might expect every time he went to table, he could hardly bear the thought of delay.

"Glad you're looking rested," he said, and his eyes said plenty more. She smiled up at him, and put her hand upon his as it lay on the cloth beside her. He shivered deliciously to the touch. It was intimate, vibrant.

"Captain Borden, you are the most stubborn man I ever tried to persuade," she said. "But I am rather glad you refused to be frightened. My blood's crawling this very moment with fright, but I like to watch a brave man face danger. I hope you won't have to face it any nearer than this."

"I hope not, for your sake," he laughed. "You've had



starts enough in the last twenty-four hours. But it wasn't just stubbornness. You may be sure that if your tale is true, there would be some showdown as soon as I put about, if any of those river-men who shipped at the last minute were part of the plot."

"There is no doubt about my tale being true!" she said sharply. "Do you imagine I'd have risked all that coming here implies unless—"

The steward entered, looking troubled.

"There's thieves aboard, sir! All the saloon dinner but the duff is gone from the galley. I just come along with the soup, and—"

"Open some canned stuff, steward. Never mind the grub that's gone. We'll inquire into that later." So far as Hilary Borden was concerned, the thieves might have taken soup and all, not forgetting the duff. He was watching Jean's face, and was amazed to see her go white, and the fear enter her eyes again.

"Doesn't that suggest anything queer to you?" she whispered.

He laughed heartily.

"Oh, yes! It suggests there are grub-pirates aboard. In all my going to sea I have never known a ship without them. It's usually the boys. What shall the steward open for you?"

"Oh, nothing, please! This soup will more than satisfy me!"

She did not finish her soup, and he found her dull company for the rest of the dinner-hour. He investigated the stealing, without any more result than to discover that a pot of rice had also vanished while the cook was serving the men's rations at the lee door. For the first time he felt vaguely uneasy. He walked forward, glancing at the pigs as he passed. One big crate was empty of all but litter and pig food. The two remaining crates were unpleasantly full of nuzzling pigs. The smell was high, under the spread canvas.

Meeting imperturbable denial in the forecabin, he gave up the problem of the missing dinner. The mates would talk about that long after the skipper had forgotten it altogether. It's a way mates have. At the galley he stopped long enough to warn the doctor that further losses would be stopped out of his wages, then returned aft.

The pirates were at odds. The fat *pyloong* turned to face a man as agile as himself—a deadlier man.

As he passed under the boat gallows, a sailor—one of the sinister-looking river-men shipped last—dropped to the deck from the structure with a thud, and one of the two men procured by Yung-Ming leaned over the edge with cold malice in his eyes. The yellow face lost its malicious grimace as the eyes met Borden's, and assumed a look of placidity. The man went about some job concerning one of the boats, but not before Borden had seen the steel of a ten-inch knife cleverly slipped out of sight.

"We'll be in the Channel by the graveyard watch," he told the second mate. "It'll be all hands then, aft anyway. I'm snatching the bird on the chart-room locker. Don't wake me unless you have to. I'll keep the deck all night. Find a chance to tip off the old hands that there may be a fuss—say it's with these new hands, and have them ready for call."

"Logged fourteen knots all through last watch, sir," the second mate said proudly.

"She ought to do fifteen with this breeze, light as she is," the skipper returned shortly. "Don't fuss too much about what she's doing. Watch out, and see you carry on as I tell you. Don't let a sail escape you. Call me the moment you see anything under sail—and don't make a song about it."

By which it may be supposed that Borden was at least uneasy. He lay down, fully dressed, and slept the afternoon through, as a sailor should be able to, uneasy or not, if doubt for the future creep into his soul.

At supper Jean was again her smiling self. Food was unstolen. After the short twilight there was a big moon, and big stars, and a fine night with the ship running free, smothered with sprays humming with pleasant stress, swaying like a living lullaby.

"I'll stay on deck with you if you don't mind," she said.

"Mind?" echoed Borden. He set a chair for her in the gentle draft of the spanker, and led her there as if she were a queen.

Eight bells, midnight, struck before either realized that it was more than evening. Mates and crew took their regular watches. There was the Old Man, on deck throughout the night, and as fully awake as if night were no time for sleeping anyhow. And was it? Jean Danes had been so long without a companion of her own race that she forgot the circumstances which had brought her to the *Yolanda*. She did not forget the circumstances to which she owed his acquaintance, however. Hilary Borden had reason to praise his luck long before that midnight bell was struck. And so far as either of them were concerned, the bell might strike eight again with no room for weariness.

Just before the end of the graveyard watch, with a moon past full almost ready to dip in the west, a thin hail came down from the foretop, where one of the boys stood extra lookout.

"Sail ahead, sir! She's standing across our bows!"

"What is it?" answered Borden, standing up. The mate was already in the mizzen rigging.

"Looks like a junk, sir!"

A figure rose up behind Borden, and a pair of long arms seized him. A clawlike hand throttled him. His cry was smothered. Specks were before his eyes. And he heard a small cry. There was a crashing blow; then the arms fell from him, the hand fell, a body went to the deck with a clatter. Jean knelt beside him as he sagged to one knee, the rope handle of a shattered bucket in her hand. The bucket was wreathed about the head of his assailant. The mate, hearing the double fall below him, was on deck in a flash, down a stay.

Swiftly the mate fastened onto the skipper's attacker and bundled him up in rope. It was one of the river-men shipped in Macao. One of the old hands steered.

"Take this!" panted Jean, handing Borden a small pistol. "I couldn't get it out in time, so I took the bucket. Please turn back! I'm frightened now."

Borden stepped to the rail, clear of all possible attack, and sent for the second mate. He keenly watched every shadow about the moonlit decks. That junk ahead was a fast sailer—kept place in the *Yolanda's* course without fuss, change as Borden might his direction. Somewhere in the deeper shadows forward there was a scuffling which ceased abruptly and left those aft wondering.

"It's too late to turn back now, little lady," said Borden grimly. "You go below, and lock your door. Take your gun. I have a regular cannon in the chart-room. Don't open your door until you hear my voice."

There was a squealing from the pig-crates. It sounded weird in the otherwise silent night. The ship sped forward swiftly; the junk ahead was very near. Jean entered the companionway; and Captain and mates went into conference.

"Take the helm and send Jones to bring all the old

hands here," ordered Borden, and got the night glasses to bear upon the junk. As the men came running aft, there was another terrific uproar among the pigs, and Paddy Daveron swore that one of them spoke to him.

"He spoke like a haythin, but spake he did, sor!"

"Stow oakum in your lungs, my lad! It's eyes and hands you need now," snapped Borden. He had satisfied

himself that once the ship fetched up to the junk, and the junk had to square away before the wind, the much more powerful *Yolanda* would easily show her heels. But he had seen the junk anticipate the moment. She had squared away, and kept her position as easily as before. Now she was edging into the ship's course, and slowing her speed.

"She must have a motor!" the second mate laughed uneasily.

"You're wiser than you think!" retorted Borden.

"That's just what she has. And you'd better break out all the arms we have and stand by. This is no joke!"

Forward, the pigs set up an ear-splitting uproar, following hard on another suddenly smothered scuffling beside the crates. The doctor, making a brave dash to his galley for the carving-knife he knew so much better than any gun, came back sweating and yammering.

"There's men for'ard I aint seen before, sir! S'help me, Hannah!"

Whatever retort Borden might have made to that queer bit of news was silenced at his lips. The junk made a swift arc, forcing the ship to luff or run her

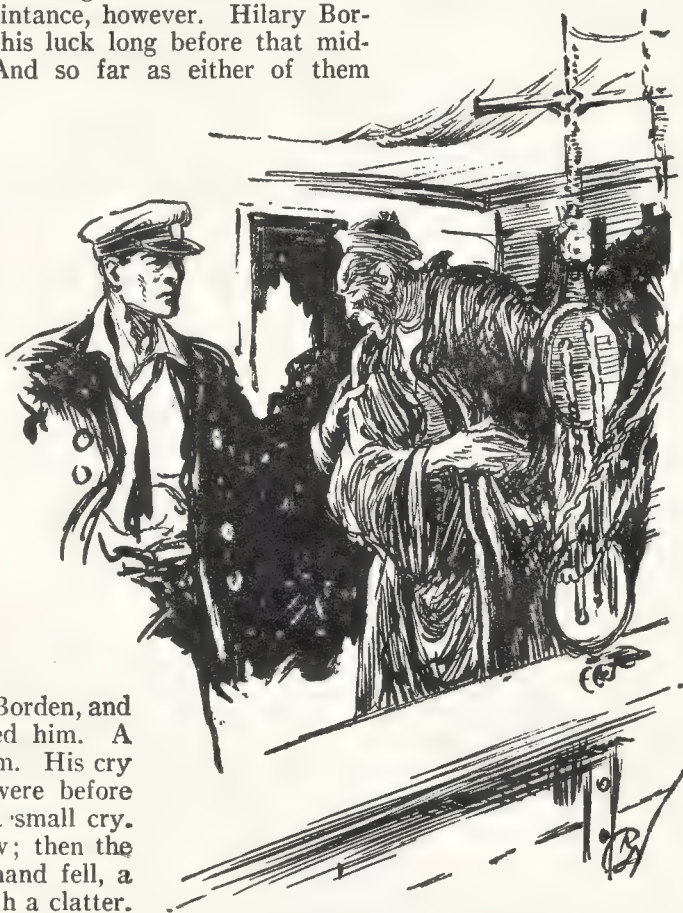
down, and while the *Yolanda's* sails were shaking, her way all but stopped for the moment, the junk sheered in with her own sails shaking but her speed reduced not one bit, and fastened to the ship's lee quarter. With the impact came a silent, efficient horde of pirates led by a fat Chinaman with the agility of a panther.

The fat pirate seemed to have panoramic vision. He went straight to Borden, and whirled aloft a two-foot blade with a sweep that made it whistle. A pirate struck down the helmsman; Borden knew that his mates were heavily attacked. He saw the helmsman go down—then he blinked under the threat of that blade and said so-long to life, for his pistol, long disused, pulled stiffly.

Futilely he struck out at the fat face with the butt; the blade above him clattered to the deck, fashing his hand, though he knew his gun-butt never met flesh. He was deafened by a crashing report at his ear, and powder burned his face. The fat pirate leaped back, wringing a numbed hand—and Jean Danes ran from the companionway where she had remained hidden, her small pistol smoking.

"Take it now!" she cried, and thrust it into Borden's hand, willing enough to take it.

Somebody steered the ship. Her sails filled again. Forward, the pigs raised a hellish racket. Men fell over pigs, and pigs turned savagely upon men. The shadowy waist



"All right, Captain," he said softly. "We are quits."

of the ship was athrong with noise. Borden and his mates found themselves back to back at the chart-room bulk-head, their old hands scattered either by force or fear. Pellew spat on his hands, gripping an old cutlass that might have drank blood at Gravelines, so blunt and rusty was it. But he had struck down a man with it. He was well content.

They were rushed, fiercely. A shot rang out from the companion door. There was a small, faint cry—another shot. Borden groaned, shooting point blank into a yellow face not a yard from his own. He tried to move forward. That cry came from Jean. He could not move. Other pirates hurled themselves into the mêlée—the numbers seemed to grow. The fat man came again, his two-foot blade swung in his left hand. Borden and the mates fought stoutly, but were pressed hard against the bulk-head so that no arm could be raised. Then there was a lull, a startling resurging of battle—the pirates were at odds.

The fat *pyloong* turned like a cat to face a man as agile as himself—a leaner man, a deadlier man. The press about the skipper thinned. He and the mates moved along toward the companionway, and found little hindrance. The moon was all but down. Her beams were level now. In the dim lamplight of the companionway Borden found a dead pirate hanging head down over the balustrade; and Jean, sitting on the floor in a waking daze, just coming to, staring at the old pistol she held in her hand—the one that had failed Borden.

"It—went—off!" she gasped. He had her in his arms, lifting her. He sat her on the door-sill—where the breeze could play about her temples; and her eyes lighted at once upon the fight, rested upon the close-locked single combat right before her—the fat *pyloong* and the lean.

"It's Yuet-Sam!" she breathed. "And—and oh, it's Yung-Ming! They're fighting!"

As they gazed, the fat *pyloong* sank gurgling to the deck, his fat face upturned to Yung-Ming in a grin. Yung-Ming uttered one word which turned the grin into a devilishly hideous grimace just before the life left the thick lips. Then Yung-Ming cried an order, and a furious rally was staged which swept the decks of battle in a minute. As abruptly as it had begun, the fight ceased; but the junk still dragged alongside the ship. Her people seemed in no hurry to leave—if any were left.

Borden and his mates stepped out to resume command, and to see what it all meant; and Yung-Ming, suddenly staggering, a hand on his side, stood before Borden, his pale face inscrutable, no flicker of curiosity apparent even at sight of Jean—who, he might suppose, was at that very moment in Canton with his Lily-Bud.

"All right, Captain," he said softly, not bothering to cloak his speech. "We are quits. I am glad you did not refuse to carry my pigs, or things might have been different. If you will dress my side, which is open, I will leave you to continue your voyage."

Borden uncovered a nasty gash, and Jean stood by with water and dressings. From time to time Yung-Ming had glanced quizzically at the girl, and at length she blurted out her part of the tale:

"I heard you speak of gold in this ship! I saw you receive and send back to Captain Borden the valuables one of your men stole from him; I heard about you being partner of Yuet-Sam, and I learned that Yuet-Sam was a *pyloong*! So I ran to warn Captain Borden, and got locked in a room when I hid because I heard your voice! I—I'm sorry I misjudged you."

"You did right," Yung-Ming replied without a trace of expression. And while Borden completed the bandaging, the Chinese had something to say for himself:

"Yuet-Sam was my partner. If you had not saved for me my Lily-Bud, and showed me my partner's evil, we would have taken the money from your ship. But you did me a service, and I have repaid it. It is my fashion. I will pay you for the food stolen to feed my men in the pig-crates and me in your boat. You are free of the Coast for your life, because Yuet-Sam is dead, and I do not forget. If you go to Wu Tsu in Amoy, and say you come from me, he will find a cargo for—you." Yung-Ming's speech was broken. He breathed in spasms. A pink fleck was at his lips. Still he spoke calmly; his eyes never lost that inscrutable expression that had met Borden's first glance.

"I took two of your worst men—Yuet-Sam's men—and left you my chief lieutenants. I came on board in that little sampan I see hanging to the after davits. I found out that Yuet-Sam meant only to carry off Missy Jean—" flickering a glance at the girl. "But he makee big mistake—" A coughing interval. "He catch my Lily-Bud; I catchee him."

One of the two men he called his lieutenants watched him with an intensity rarely seen in unangered yellow men.

"Why didn't you save all this by just warning me?" Borden asked, uneasy at the look on the man's face, now that the dawn had come. The two big yellow men had picked the wheezing leader up, and were bearing him to the rail where the junk still towed noisily.

"I—mus'—pay—him—for—my—Lily-Bud's fears! I have paid!" Yung-Ming coughed. At the rail he halted his bearers with a weak gesture. "Be good—to—Missy Jean. She—is a—good—"

A cough strangled the words. He was lifted over the rail. The junk cast off; the *Yolanda* held her course for Amoy. Borden watched through the glasses until the junk was half a mile away; then he turned to Jean with a grave face.

"That's a debt paid to the uttermost!" he said. "Yung-Ming's dead, Jean."

"A *pyloong*!" she whispered. "Do you believe he could be, Captain Borden?"

ANOTHER moon was rising when Amoy port came in sight. By that time the decks had been cleared. The pigs had been recreated to be put ashore in Wu Tsu's care for Yung-Ming's account. Men walked the moonlit decks in a moderating breeze, making little of their hurts. Even the stricken helmsman had fallen more from fright than from the slicing knife-slash that made him a hero.

Borden and Jean watched the nearing shore lights. They had been drawn very close in the last two days. Holding due respect for the memory of Yung-Ming, they were young, still. Already it was Hilary and Jean with them. Jean had sorrowed briefly over Lily-Bud, who was far better off with her aunt in Canton than she was while a headsman's sword hung over her parent's *pyloong* head. Now she felt happier. Nothing on earth like some physical emergency to bring kindred souls into tune.

"Hilary," she said, laying a hand upon his, which somehow had found a place against her heart, "what was it that you were about to say to me when the sailor came and reported that sampan fouled under the stern?"



A Soldier of France

The thrill-filled biography of a fighting man who was an officer of the Chasseurs d'Afrique and the Foreign Legion, who has fought in a score of battles—and survives fourteen wounds.

I—The Baptism of Fire

ON a sultry afternoon of August, 1912, I reached Souk el Arba at the head of a party of Chasseurs d'Afrique who were coming to reinforce the cavalry force attached to the Column Ruef.

Our whole journey from Fez had been marked by shots of invisible Moors firing on us from their hiding-places on the rocky hills which flanked the ill-kept road. Luckily only a couple of troopers had been slightly wounded.

As soon as I entered the camp, I looked for Captain Picard, who was in charge of the half-troop of spahis and the two platoons of Chasseurs d'Afrique composing the cavalry of Commandant Ruef; a grinning Senegalese tirailleur pointed to me a lone horseman who had just emerged from behind a group of tents and was riding slowly toward us. A few moments later I greeted that gifted leader, who was destined to lose his life one year later charging at the head of his squadron in the zone of Meknes.

Captain Picard was a typical southwestern Frenchman—slightly above the medium height, slender, wiry, alert. The firm line of his mouth and the severe expression of his weather-beaten countenance were somewhat softened by the humorous twinkle of his eyes. His penetrating glance scanned me from head to foot.

"It is only a few months since you left Saumur, *n'est ce pas?*" he then asked with a tinge of sarcasm in his voice.

"I left the Cavalry School not long ago," I said uneasily, "I have been lately on staff duty in Kabylie."

"Then you don't come fully unprepared," Picard drawled. "The Kabyles, who gave so much trouble to our colonial forces a half century ago, are Berbers like the Moors, and like them in many ways. Your experiences among them should enable you to understand our Moroccan enemies. If you listen to orders and refrain from making decisions of your own during the first couple of weeks, you will learn how to conduct yourself under fire without endangering unnecessarily the life of your men. You will command the first platoon."

In that moment, without a single neigh or snort of warning, my horse Tamerlan pivoted swiftly on his forelegs and aimed a sharp kick at the horse of Captain Picard; by sheer instinct I quickly pulled at the reins and applied the pressure of my legs so that, partly checked, he missed his mark by a narrow inch.

"*Nom d'un chien!*" Picard shouted. "What is ailing that confounded beast?"

"I am sorry!" I apologized. "I was off my guard; I thought that the long journey had sobered the temper of the rascal."

"You have a spirited beast," Picard smiled. "Where did you pick that troublemaker?"

There was a friendly ring in his voice; I felt reassured.

"In Saumur," I replied. "His former owner, a captain of field artillery, had hastily got rid of him. He had been unable to last more than a few minutes at a time on Tamerlan's saddle; the beast had finally crushed the skull of his orderly with a treacherous kick."

"But I feel sure that this animal had grown vicious because he had been abused," I hastily continued. "He shows clearly the good blood of his thoroughbred sire and pure Arabian Asil mother. When I came to Saumur, I singled him out at once. He gave me no end of troubles for a week or two, but he is now a most satisfactory mount. He does not attempt mayhem any more, on me or on my orderly."

"Good, *parbleu!*" Picard said. "Mark my words, that horse will serve you well. Unfortunately, he seems at war with the remainder of this wide world," he continued. "See that he does no harm to any of your troopers. Now go to get acquainted with your chasseurs, *mon cher* Brigaud."

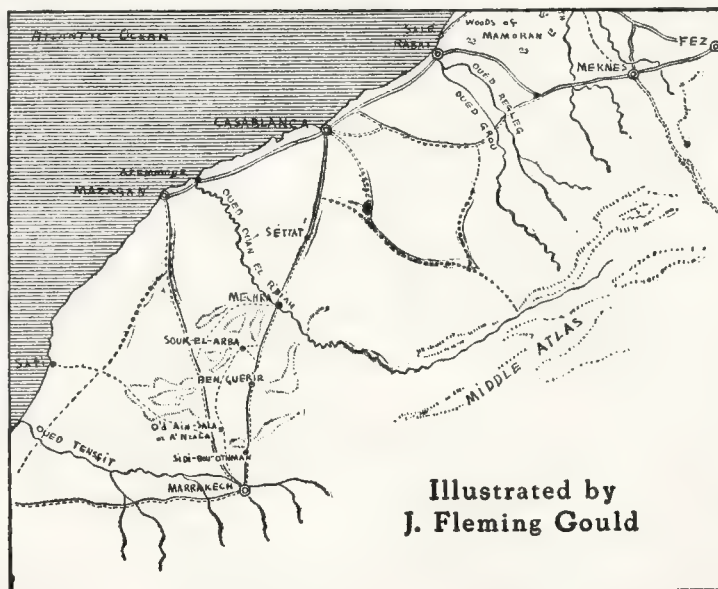
A few minutes later I found that the commander of the second platoon was an adjutant, and therefore inferior to me in rank. Owing to the fact that the former leader of the outfit had been lately transferred on account of illness

to the military hospital of Casablanca, I was automatically in charge of the whole half-troop. The inebriating thought that nearly sixty seasoned warriors depended on my orders filled my young bosom with inordinate pride.

"From the Sidi Commander, Sidi Lieutenant!"

Sharply awakened from the fascinating thought of my sudden elevation, I turned about and confronted a tall spahi, who, one hand to the side of his tall red bonnet, proffered with the other a closed envelope. I opened it, and grim reality sobered me at once.

The order, addressed to all commanders of infantry, cavalry and mountain artil-



By ARMAND BRIGAUD

lery units of the column, stated that on the sixteenth a party of French officers commanded by Major Verlet had been lured to a parley by a caïd of the Aounats. On the way it was suddenly set upon by a swarm of tribesmen; some of the officers had been killed during a brief and furious mêlée; others had been made prisoners and brought to Marrakech, stronghold of Caïd Eel Heiba, supreme leader of the Rehamne, Aounat and Ksiba rebels.

"Eel Heiba is now facing with the bulk of his forces the other columns of General Mangin's forces," the order read. "He will most likely threaten to kill the prisoners if our troops persist in stamping out his power. A faithful spahi of Verlet's escort who succeeded in escaping brought an alarming note hastily written by Commandant Verlet; the prisoners are constantly abused and hourly in danger of being killed.

"We will therefore storm Marrakech by surprise and deliver our friends. To avoid the *harkas* barring our way, we will execute a circling movement; we will march southwest, reach Oud Ain Salah; we will then turn east and advance on Marrakech. The movement will begin tomorrow, at four A.M."

The order further gave detailed instructions concerning the marching formation of the troops.

Instantly I realized that, though my theoretical knowledge and my ability as platoon and troop commander were sound, I knew next to nothing about the fighting methods of the Moors nor had I ever been in actual combat. The logical thing to do was to ask the advice of an expert.

Adjutant Guerin was staring at me dubiously. No doubt he was able to read on my face what was in my mind and he felt serious misgivings. And he was far from being wrong. A foolhardy infantry leader may cause no end of useless trouble, but an inexperienced, strong-headed cavalry leader is all the more dangerous, to his own men, because the results of his orders are sudden and uncontrollable because of the rapidity of cavalry movements.

"My dear Guerin," I said, "no doubt you have a great deal of fighting experience."

"Almost twelve years, *mon Lieutenant*," he replied.

"I will rely much on your advice," I said. "I have never been in Morocco before, and I have a lot to learn."

Guerin sighed, relieved; his blanketlike red beard quivered in a happy smile.

"Don't worry, Lieutenant, you will get rapidly a grip on things," he eagerly replied under his breath. "I will do everything I can to make matters easier for you."

"You will notice when we encounter the Moors that our troops will take a deep, square-like formation. That peculiar array, so different from the one used in European warfare, is due to the tactics of the tribesmen of the Atlas. They are mostly horsemen, and what they lack in tactical skill they make up in mobility. Their attack, which always begins against the head of the column, extends soon over its sides, and almost always strikes in full force on the rear lines."

A few moments later I met again Captain Picard, who repeated his warning to obey orders and keep calm. The evening supper was quickly consumed; I spent that night in a hammock suspended between two *jubiers* (jube trees). I was less than twenty-one years old; in spite of the excitement connected with my position and the uncertainty of the next day, I was tired; at that age nothing can stop a man from sleeping soundly; and when, in the gray of dawn the bugles sounded reveille, I jumped from my hammock fit and well rested.

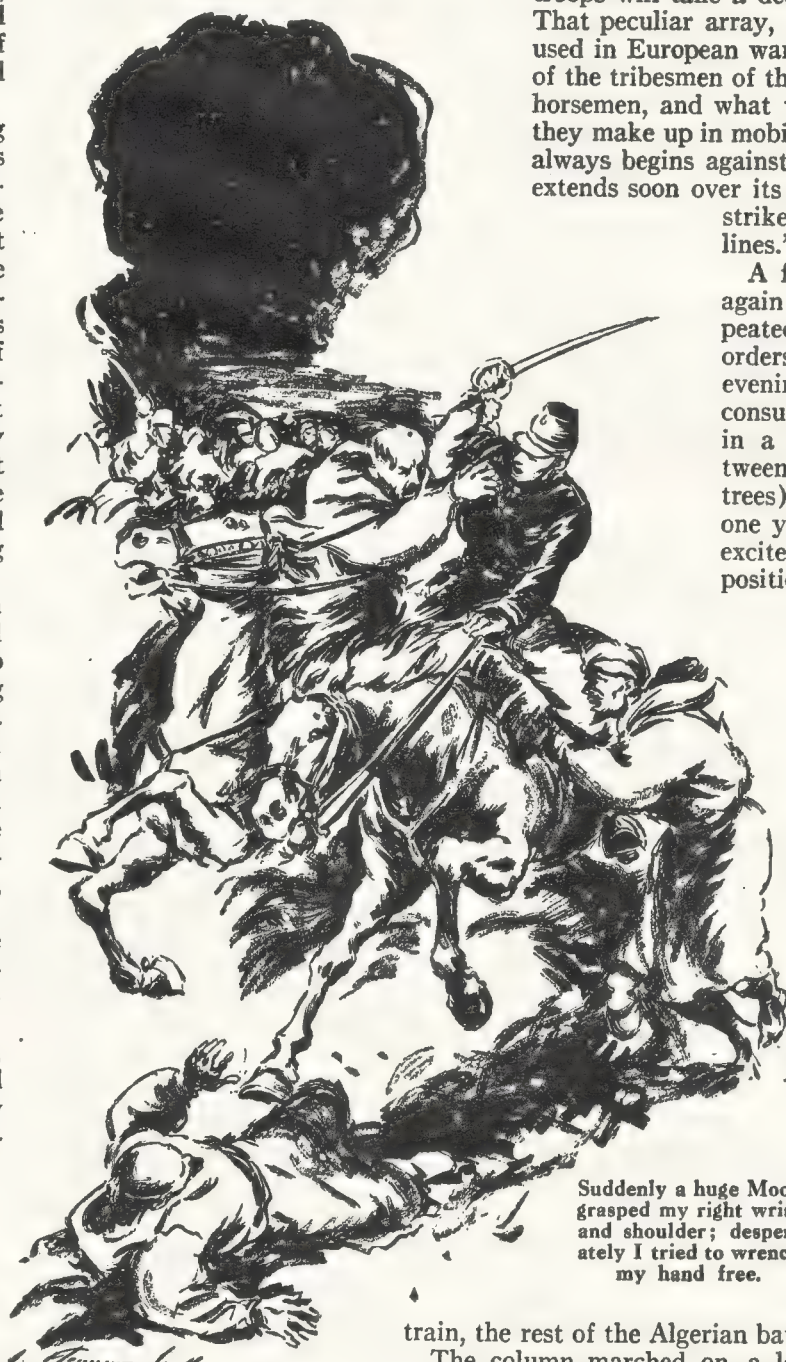
The spahis, led personally by Captain Picard, trotted gayly ahead to reconnoiter the ground. Two companies of the First Foreign regiment, the sixth battalion of Senegalese tirailleurs, two companies of the third battalion, third regiment of Algerian tirailleurs, and two batteries of mountain artillery followed; last came the supply

train, the rest of the Algerian battalion, and my chasseurs.

The column marched on, a long ribbon of grim-faced men and flashing steel. The surrounding country was a succession of sloping hills and rocky valleys covered with thin, spiky shrubs and spare grass. Scattered thickets of *jubiers* and tamarisks clustered at wide intervals.

I was tense and alert, and I felt thrown on my resources, because Guerin rode with a veil of scouts three or four hundred yards behind us, to ward off a sudden attack on the rear. But the easy, swinging gait of my horse and the comparative comfort of the march soon fostered in me a feeling of well-being; gradually my nervousness subsided.

The ground was so compact and hard that the hundreds of tramping feet, the wheels of the carriages and the hoofs of the horses lifted little or no dust at all. Slowly the sun rose high on the horizon and the heat became intense.



Suddenly a huge Moor grasped my right wrist and shoulder; desperately I tried to wrench my hand free.

Toward eleven we stopped to eat and rest. The halt lasted until two P.M., to avoid marching during the warmest hours of the day. Then the column again swung ahead.

We were scheduled to reach Oud Ain Salah around four P.M. The march from there to Marrakech was going to be considerably longer, but infinitely safer. However, our vanguard had failed to perceive a single tribesman, and we grew convinced that with our circling movement we had foiled the hordes left by Caïd Eel Heiba to guard the road to Marrakech.

Around three P.M. we reached the top of a ridge which dominated a wide extent of large valleys and rolling hills; off in the distance we perceived a tiny white cube perched on top of a precipitous cliff.

"That is the tomb of Mrbet (hermit) el Tarik, descendant from the conqueror of Spain," announced Captain Cosman, who had left his company of tirailleurs to ride with me. "Oud Ain Salah is not a village proper, but a hamlet built for the comfort of the pilgrims."

We came down from the ridge and entered a large saddle of the ground. Half of the column climbed a second line of hills and streamed out of sight on the opposite slope. Suddenly we heard a distant salvo. The command to halt echoed from one end of the column to the other.

A few moments later an aide-camp galloped toward us. He exchanged a few words with Captain Cosman, who shouted an order; two companies of tirailleurs turned about, ran at the double quick past my chasseurs and lined four deep two hundred yards further. Instantly a company of légionnaires ran back and formed likewise to the right, while a Senegalese company hurried back too and knelt with ready guns, covering our left.

"We are in for it," I exclaimed to myself. "This is the battle-array mentioned by Guérin!"

A group of galloping horsemen appeared on the hill in front of us; I recognized the red dolmans of the spahis. Picard, sword in hand, rode at their head. At a flashing sign of his naked sword, the spahis galloped swiftly down the slope, described a perfect semicircle and came to line in double order abreast of the chasseurs.

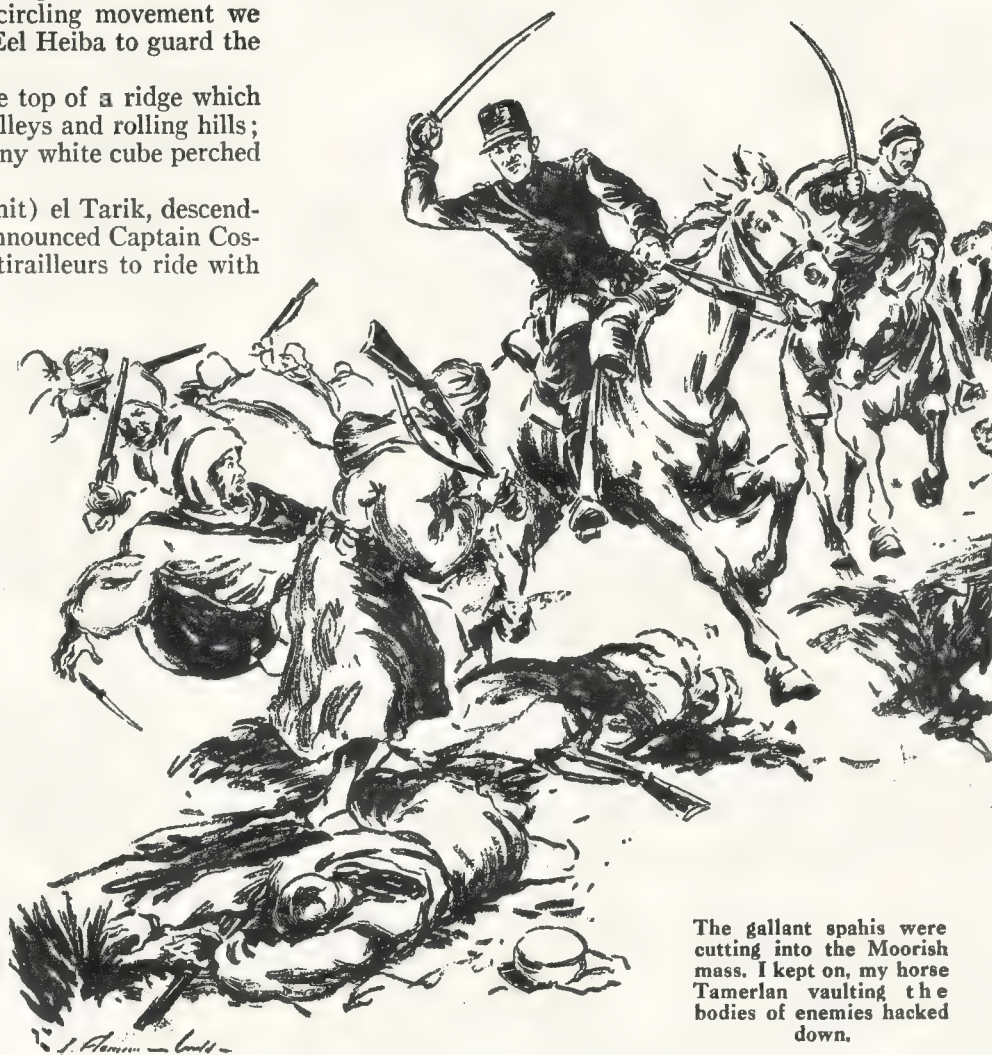
"Brigaud, *mon garçon*, this is your baptism of fire!" Picard shouted gayly. "A good-sized *harka* is coming against us."

A scattered firing, growing rapidly in intensity, roared behind the ridge. The batteries took position in front of us, just below the edge. Their commanders quickly made out elevation and direction; a few moments later two thunderous salvos rang out.

But the rifle fire was furiously growing and apparently approaching us. Several bullets began to whine uncomfortably close to our ears; I felt something like a glancing blow tapping on my side; I lowered my eyes and I saw that a bullet had sliced a neat furrow in my light blue tunic, slightly burning the shirt underneath. "It almost got you, Armand!" I muttered.

A confused murmur arose among the troopers lined in double order behind me. Two soldiers had tumbled from

the saddles; four or five chasseurs instantly jumped to the ground and ran to pull them away from under the hoofs of their prancing horses. One of the stricken men moaned softly; two troopers grasped the arms of the other and dragged him out of the array. His spurred heels slid limp on the ground, lifting a small trail of dust; his head hung



The gallant spahis were cutting into the Moorish mass. I kept on, my horse Tamerlan vaulting the bodies of enemies hacked down.

back; his eyes were glassy and the skin of his face had assumed a greenish hue; a few drops of blood shone like rubies among the ruffled damp hair covering his forehead.

A morbid fascination kept my eyes glued on that poor fellow; the chasseurs laid him and the other on a clearing to the left of the troop. I noticed that they busied themselves around the other, who moved slightly, but they left this one alone. I had to fight against an unhealthy attraction which pulled me toward the wounded and the dead. I felt a strange urge to look at them to take notice of what had happened so suddenly to them. I was later to grow accustomed to the sight of numberless dead. But as long as I live, I shall never forget that first time when the mystery of death became so evident under my young eyes.

The uproar of the battle had become deafening. A great nervousness slowly gripped and tensed my muscles. It was not fear; I confusedly felt that I would welcome an order to advance, a chance of engaging in actual combat. But that inactivity, the lack of knowledge of what was going on in front of us, was almost unbearable.

"*Eh bien, mon lieutenant, je suis ici!*" I turned relieved, and I met the friendly smile of Guérin, who, his scouting becoming useless, had ridden at top speed to join

his unit. The presence of that friendly, efficient helper acted like a charm. The nervous tension snapped and I found myself smiling happily.

Groups of tribesmen were appearing right and left of our array. They rode on small, long-maned horses. Huge, bearded men, most of them, they were draped in white



tunics and snow-white mantles. Right and left of us légionnaires and tirailleurs began firing at them. We saw several Moors tumble down from the saddle and remain motionless on the ground, but the numbers of the attacking tribesmen seemed to grow with the passing of every minute. Soon they spread toward the rear, and the Algerians began firing too.

To decrease their vulnerability, Picard ordered the troopers dismounted; it was time, because the bullets howled thick in all directions. But the fiery captain remained straight on the saddle; although I felt like dismounting too, I realized that I had to follow his example. I pulled out a cigarette and lighted it—with some trouble, though, because my hand was rather unsteady. I am not ashamed to say that I was, after all, less than twenty-one years old and new to the realism of war. After a couple of hearty puffs, I felt more at ease. My horse Tamerlan, too, helped me to face that first ordeal with his wonderful behavior; unlike the other mounts, who whinnied and pranced, shaking at every salvo, Tamerlan stared haughtily at the battle, munching now and then at the spiky grass covering the ground. I chuckled, thinking of the face of my father when he would receive a letter relating that the horse had shown more spunk under fire than his son.

The shrill sound of a bugle suddenly echoed on the other side of the ridge; the firing on that part abated.

"The infantry is going to charge," Guerin said.

We heard a distant cheer, mingled with cries of "*Vivet!*" A few tense moments passed; suddenly the artillery began to fire feverishly round after round. Rifle-fire crashed again far in front of us, but it seemed to lack cohesion. Something was going wrong.

An aid-de-camp appeared on top of the ridge; hit by a bullet, his horse reared and crashed to the ground. The aid had quickly pulled his feet from the stirrups; he rolled a couple of paces away from the stricken beast, jumped to his feet and ran limping toward Captain Picard.

"Quick, Captain, with your troop!" he yelled at the top of his lungs. "The infantry is sorely pressed. Commandant Ruef orders the cavalry to make way for them!"

"*A cheval!*" Picard roared. In a split second the troopers vaulted to their saddles; Picard shouted a second order; while trotting, we mustered in columns of platoons, each platoon deployed in double file after the preceding one, the spahis first, with Picard in front of them, the chasseurs next. We broke to a gallop, rode swiftly over the top of the ridge and down the opposite slope. Abruptly we noticed that we were running serious danger of being wiped out.

Our artillerymen were firing percussion shells which wrought terrific havoc among the Berbers, but as soon as an exploding bolt of steel tore a gap in the ranks of the tribesmen, a new white-clad swarm filled it and rushed on. The Berbers seemed numberless; they filled the plain, the surrounding hills; and others appeared continuously on the farthest ranges, as far as our eyes could see.

Three companies of Senegalese and one of légionnaires had made a bayonet charge and rolled the enemy back a quarter of a mile; then the numbers of the tribesmen had smashed through them. The hard soldiers of the Légion had closed shoulder to shoulder and stood their ground; the Senegalese, though fighting stubbornly, had been broken into various scattered groups, through which the enemy filtered, advancing toward the ridge. And, of course, our infantrymen were so closely pressed that, far from being able to make any further advance they had no chance to come back to their former position.

Old hand at that game, Picard rode down the foremost tribal group clambering on the slope, then charged through the gap between the légionnaires and Senegalese.

The speed of our mounts was so great that the compact mass of tribesmen loomed to me like a moving wall rapidly pushed against us. The next instant the spahis smashed through them. At the head of the chasseurs, I was not able to strike a single blow, for the gallant spahis were cutting into the Moorish mass like a knife through butter; for several minutes I glanced alternately at a solid line of red-coated, swarthy soldiers galloping like the wind, the shiny iron of their horses' hoofs flashing in quick cadence in front of me, and at two walls of white *djellabas* and swarthy faces of howling Moors sliding swiftly right and left of us.

I kept on, gripping my sword, my horse Tamerlan vaulting continuously over the bodies of enemies hacked down by the spahis. We kept on until we reached the foot of a towering cliff; then we turned slowly; describing an immense figure eight through the enemy, Picard led us back to the other side of the Senegalese.

In the meantime Commandant Ruef had not lost a chance. Taking advantage of the success of Picard's charge, he launched to the help of légionnaires and Senegalese the half-battalion Algerian tirailleurs which had been held until then as a reserve.

That combined action of cavalry and infantry bewildered the Moors, who retreated in utter disorder; half a mile farther, while Picard on his way back rode down a last horde of tribesmen still tearing to the left of the Senegalese battalion, the compact arrival of reinforcements stopped the Moors and gave them new courage; but the infantry was now retreating in good order on the ridge.

We came back on our former position from the side opposite that whence we had started. A rapid roll-call discovered fifteen spahis and two chasseurs missing. These were marked as dead because it was well known that even if some of them had fallen wounded during the charge, the bloodthirsty Moors had by then dispatched them; and another seven spahis were so seriously wounded that they had to be transferred to the medical section attached to the column.

Commandant Ruef had realized by that time, that the surprise having failed, the storming of Marrakech was out of the question. The overwhelming numbers of the enemy convinced him that the best he could do was to retreat, and do it quickly too.

To the Algerian battalion, which had been less tried than the other units, fell the task of opening a way through the Moors blocking our line of retreat; the artillery and the Senegalese were safely hemmed in the middle; the two companies of the Légion and our troop received the unenviable task of acting as a rearguard.

For about an hour things went as well as possible under the circumstances. The two companies of légionnaires poured a withering fire on the enemy, then withdrew at the run toward a position farther back, whence we covered their escape with another blast of sustained firing. When the légionnaires had reached another position a couple hundred yards farther, they too turned about and began firing again. We then vaulted to the saddle and galloped back another two or three hundred yards still farther, where we jumped down and began firing anew while the légionnaires retreated in their turn. Keeping on with this system, we withdrew for about three miles without serious losses and easily holding the enemy at bay. Then suddenly things took a turn for the worse.

The Algerians had scattered with a sustained drive the Moors confronting them; for a while the main body of the column had thus marched back without encountering serious difficulties; but suddenly, in crossing a wide gorge, a swarm of Aounats emerged from a winding ravine; charging against the middle of the column, they caught the Senegalese guarding that side almost unprepared. The fight, rapid and furious, obliged Ruef to call back an Algerian company. At length the Moors were annihilated, but the losses had been heavy and the morale of the troops impaired. To make matters worse, valuable skins and barrels of water carried by a string of camels had been pierced by the attacking Berbers. With the chance of finding the next wells and streams guarded by enemies, and our water provisions almost exhausted, the menace of thirst loomed as a new scourge.

Up to that moment our troops had been engaged for about four hours. The sun was falling fast, and darkness threatened to envelop us, increasing our difficulties. Our men were hungry, having had no food for nearly seven hours. We had meat, but not a chance to cook it because we had no water; each man had with him some biscuit and a ration of dates; other supplies had been destroyed by the Moors.

After another hour of retreat the pursuing enemies grew fewer in number, but all our water was gone. It was night by then, and as it happens in the Atlas, the temperature was falling rapidly. The reports of firearms were repeated uncannily by the surrounding echoes; the cold, silvery light of the moon and the stars deepened by force of contrast the shadows of the gorges. Senegalese and Alge-

rians alike, thinking they saw enemies in every fluttering of light or shadow in the ravines, fired continuously crashing salvos which alarmed incessantly the column from end to end.

Commandant Ruef realized that his troops were exhausted. And we were menaced by a danger worse than the pursuit of the Moors who had clashed with us near Oud Ain Salah. The Atlas swarmed with other roving *harkas*; a sudden encounter with one of those hordes was likely to prove fatal to our soldiers, who were too far spent to fight efficiently a fresh foe.

A halt was imperative. Commandant Ruef stopped the column and mustered légionnaires and Senegalese in a wide, hollow square which sheltered the other units, our cavalry included; our troopers dismounted, eased the saddle-girths and hurriedly tethered their mounts. We lay on the hard ground, too tired to unfasten the buttons of our dolmans; bullets of pursuing Moors whined above us, but we were so exhausted that we instantly fell asleep.

When Guerin awakened me sometime later I confusedly thought that I had rested only a few minutes. "*Parbleu*," I mumbled, "what was the use of granting a halt if they had to call us at once?"

"You have slept more than three hours," Guerin replied. "The Algerians took the place of the légionnaires and the Senegalese long ago."

I arose unsteadily, drugged with weariness and half deafened by the continuous firing which was magnified in a nerve-racking way by the echoes of the surrounding mountains. I instantly noticed that while most of the troopers were busy fastening the saddles and replacing the bits in the mouths of the horses, a few lay as if they were deeply asleep; one in particular was sprawled in a most odd position: his hands seemed to clutch at the ground, and his face was imbedded into a patch of spiky grass. I stared meaningfully at Guerin, who nodded gravely, whispering: "While they were reposing, death stole over them like a robber."

Picard was calling for me.

My troop commander was already on the saddle of his long-limbed charger. "You are very young and not yet broken to the wear and tear of an ordeal like this," he remarked, glancing at my sagging figure.

Though almost ill with exhaustion, I would have blown my brains rather than confess it. I protested that I was perfectly fit.

"All right, then," Picard smiled. "The Moors are catching up with us," he continued, emphasizing every word, "but their careless way of rushing scattered after us shows that they don't dream of a possible counter-stroke. Commandant Ruef feels sure that a rapid attack will surprise and bewilder them; and of course, on account of its greater mobility, cavalry is eminently qualified for such an undertaking."

"We have less than sixty troopers, but the enemy will be unable to see how small our numbers are, on account of the scanty light. We will launch a far-flung charge; I don't think we will kill many Moors, but we will perhaps stop the pursuit."

The streamer of the spahis was lifted proudly by a veteran sergeant; the metallic crescent topping the shaft shone under the beams of the moon; the horse-tails fastened beneath whipped in the breeze. A few moments later we trotted through the aisle that the Algerian tirailleurs opened for us.

Shouting to deploy "*en fourrageurs*," Captain Picard



spurred his horse to a gallop; we split on a far-flung line of groups of two and three horsemen, each group several yards distant from the nearest ones; we advanced thus, covering a large extent of ground.

Ere long we began to see Moors darting from nooks of the ground, from behind heaps of stones, fleeing like hares frightened by an approaching pack of hounds. We galloped on, sabering now and then tribesmen who in spite of their frantic lunges happened to be in the path of our horses.

We were after bigger quarry, and we soon encountered what we were looking for; as we turned a jutting mound, a compact mass of tribesmen suddenly loomed ahead of us. With a piercing shout we charged against them.

As Ruef had foreseen, the shock of being suddenly attacked when they expected to chase safely after an exhausted foe frightened the Moors, who turned about and fled. We tore through them, sabering wildly to the right and to the left. Leaving the panicky remains of that horde behind us, we galloped for several minutes, encountering and putting to flight one after another minor groups of dumfounded tribesmen.

The fast ride and the excitement of the running fight made my blood run faster; the fresh air of the night rustled pleasantly against my face; my weariness temporarily faded. I glanced happily at Picard, who galloped straight on the saddle, resting the flat of his sword on the thick mane of his horse; he appeared lithe, strong, infinitely master of his trade of war; I felt sure that under such a leader nothing could go wrong.

A shout attracted my attention to the ground in front of us. Another Moorish horde on foot and on horse loomed two or three hundred yards farther; spurring furiously our mounts, and shouting at the top of our lungs, we rode toward them like a whirlwind; these Moors also failed to oppose a spirited resistance; we routed them in a few moments and scattered them in all directions.

We rode for about another mile and a half, meeting only desultory opposition. Our horses were growing tired; lathered and snorting heavily, they galloped with faltering strides.

At length Picard lifted high his sword and motioned to slacken our gait until we gradually came to a halt. Without dismounting, a few troopers tightened the loosened straps of their saddles, amidst loud snortings and whinnys of the horses who thus cleared their lungs.

Three-fourths of our ride back proved uneventful; but on the very place where we had smashed through the first horde, the tribesmen had rallied; warned of our approach by the clattering hoofs of our mounts, they received us with a hail of bullets which luckily tore the air high above our heads, because bad light and nervousness rendered their fire extremely inaccurate.

To charge *en fourrageurs* against that embattled mob would have been suicidal. Captain Picard shouted to close our ranks; we catapulted on the Moors and smashed a gap through them; but swarms of enraged tribesmen closed in on us from every side.

The standard-bearer crumpled in the saddle. I tried



"*Mon lieutenant,*" Guerin said, "you look extremely tired. We wounded have more water than we need."

to saber a way up to him, but I was unable to break through the crowding Moors. Across a maze of raised weapons I had a confused vision of Guerin bareheaded, grasping the tip of the streamer which had been seized by the tribesmen. In that moment a glancing blow split my right eyebrow; with the vision of one eye dimmed by gushing blood, I felt another couple of ill-aimed slashes pricking at my head and left hand.

Suddenly a huge Moor grasped my right wrist and shoulder; while I desperately tried to wrench my hand free and stab at him with my sword, a dismounted tribesman got hold of one of my ankles and nearly unhorsed me. My muscles grew weary; I was going to be dragged to the ground, when I confusedly saw the light blue sleeve and flashing saber of a chasseur quickly descending on the man who clung at my boot; the wretch screamed, released his hold and fell under the hoofs of the chasseur's horse. With a frantic effort I succeeded in wrenching my right hand free, jerked my elbow back and struck with all my might. I felt the sickening jar of my blade piercing through something soft and yielding; a fleeting expression of pain convulsed the hairy face of the Moor; then a strange grimace resembling a silly grin spread over his features. His eyes rolled back, and for a split second he leaned on the blade impaling his body.

I had to pull with all my strength to tear my sword free; I had forgotten to follow instruction which dictates to thrust with sword or bayonet without unnecessary effort, to avoid entangling the blade.

The body of the Moor slipped headfirst to the ground while his frightened horse sprang sidewise; digging my spurs in Tamerlan's belly, I catapulted into the fight which still raged around the standard. Instantly frenzied tribesmen jumped on me from every side; I sabered and parried and thrust like a madman until, while warding off a sword-stroke, I saw with the corner of my eye a rifle-butt descending on my head—and a quick twist of my neck and shoulders was not enough to avoid the blow completely.

I reeled, clinging to the saddle by sheer instinct; then chasseurs rode to my right and left, warding off the Moors.

It was time, because everything seemed whirling fast around my glazed eyes. Then I felt a strong arm thrown around my belt, steadying me.

When I fully gained my senses, we were clear of the tribesmen and in sight of the Algerians, who cheered wildly. Guerin rode up to Captain Picard; his head was covered with blood, but he proudly held high the standard; I smiled happily, but that very move stirred the skin of my face and revived the pain racking my injured head, and the smile became a grimace.

A military surgeon quickly stitched my eyebrow, closed with adhesive tape the cuts on my left hand and head, and fingered the big lump raised on my head by that rifle-butt. Wincing because each prod of his fingers was torture, I heard him say that he was unable to see if the skull was injured or not, but I knew only too well that I had a splitting headache. . . .

Our troop was through as a fighting unit. We had returned with less than thirty men mounted on lame and winded horses. Five troopers collapsed shortly afterward on account of their wounds, and about as many were declared unfit for duty by the surgeon. The remainder were ordered to watch the supply-wagons. Those were a motley of military and native wagons pulled by mules and led by Moroccan blacks. The latter were former soldiers of Sultan Mulay Afid; accustomed to the routs of the old-style Sheriffian *mehallas*, they seemed eager to desert.

THE wagons were under the command of Captain Burtan, a product of the Foreign Legion. The bridge of his long nose was broken and flattened crookedly, rendering almost hideous his fat, swarthy countenance. He was huge and slightly stooping; nobody knew his original nationality, which was very hard to conjecture, because he swore with equal proficiency in four different languages. Burtan's bravery was attested by a row of decorations, and his ability as a driver of men was indisputable; but his general appearance and his thick voice at once grated on my nerves.

Picard had been ordered to take charge of the *légionnaires*, replacing Captain Perrier, whose hip had been shattered by a bullet; he asked if I wanted to go with him, when Burtan exploded:

"My *adjutant* rides with a bullet in his calf in one of my fifty wagons, which are crammed with wounded on top of their usual load. This young fellow could help me but you want to take him away! That will not do, my dear Picard; if the troopers will be under my orders, I expect that Lieutenant Brigaud will come with me too."

"All right, you may have him," Picard snapped. "Don't worry, Brigaud," he said, turning to me. "I will keep an eye on you just the same."

While I observed with forlorn eyes the trim figure of Picard walking toward the *légionnaires*, Burtan plied me with endless instructions and warnings.

"Keep walking back and forth along the convoy. You will be able to do so because the column will perforce advance at a snail's pace. And remember," he concluded, "you must do so on foot. A man high on the saddle of a horse can't see if the harness of a mule slips out of its place, or if a wheel is running out of the axle."

The new duty proved a nightmare. Endlessly, wagon after wagon stopped with some kind of trouble which had to be repaired on the spot; my troopers cursed; the muleteers jabbered volubly, and Burtan reviled everybody. During the remainder of the night and most of the next day he did not grant me a moment of peace; his raucous voice was constantly calling me, asking endless questions.

At length the red light of sunset covered our faces with a crimson hue. The Turcos (Algerian *tirailleurs*) who

composed the vanguard increased their pace, because they knew that the fresh wells and whitewashed buildings of Souk el Arba were near. The other troops had not the tremendous endurance of the Arabs and Kabyles composing the Algerian battalion, but the knowledge that rest was near helped them to stand the strain of a quicker gait.

But when, after rounding a last bend of the valley, we came in sight of Souk el Arba, a red halo rivaling in blazing color with the disk of the rising sun enveloped our supply base; during our absence a Moorish horde had stormed Souk el Arba, had annihilated the few platoons which had been left there, and had set fire to the buildings.

Our makeshift barracks, our food and medical supplies and our reserve clothing had been destroyed, but the wells were still there. The Turcos clamored loudly, asking to be led to a charge against the Moors who still darted among the billows of smoke.

A few moments later the Algerian battalion sprang forward with lowered bayonets; they quickly ran over the choppy ground parting them from our burning supply center and disappeared amidst the dense smoke close on the heels of the escaping Moors.

When we entered the destroyed village, the Algerians had put out the fire. They milled around a couple of wells, the others having been filled with stones and loose earth by the Moors.

We had found one-sixth of the old provision of water of Souk el Arba—just enough to slacken our thirst, fill our canteens, give a good drink to the beasts and put aside a few extra canteens for the wounded.

Our only safety lay now in joining the other columns of Mangin's command before exhaustion or the Moors would overcome us.

Commandant Ruef selected eight troopers and as many horses less weary than the others, and sent them toward northeast by different trails, to ask for help. And after a couple of hours of rest we began marching toward Mechra, center of operations of the Column Joseph. . . .

Around midnight our situation took a decided turn for the worse; a far-flung patrol of spahis reported that a large Moorish camp barred the way. It was easy to see that our troops were not in condition to pull through another desperate encounter; the only way of escape left to us lay through the longer trail which followed the Ouled Ouham (a dried river-bed running southeast) to the Ouled, and later the hamlet of Ben Guerin, then the path leading northeast to Mechra. That required us, among other things, to walk back part of the way to Souk el Arba, but we had little choice.

WHEN we entered the Ouham zone, our canteens became empty and our thirst agonizing. The vegetation was negligible and the ground brittle; a thin, impalpable dust stirred by scores of feet, clattering hoofs and rolling wheels entered our nostrils and panting mouths, choked us and increased the maddening torture of thirst.

My weary legs refused to carry me farther; dazed and spent, I saw several wagons roll by; then I heard some one calling. Wild-eyed and almost demented, I lifted my head and saw under the bandages swathing the upper part of his head the flaming beard of Guerin. The simple thought that I was near a friend gave me new strength; I began walking alongside his wagon. "*Mon lieutenant*," Guerin said, "you look extremely tired."

I tried to lie, to say that I was faring well, but my swollen tongue stuck against my blistered lips; I stared at him without a word. Guerin understood; he took a large can which might have contained ten liters of water and proffered it to me, whispering: "We wounded have more water than we need. Drink some of this."



I tried to shake my head in denial, but Guerin grasped my shoulder, drew me nearer and placed the can right near my face. Hearing the liquid thump against the metal of the container, I was seized by an irresistible craving; with trembling hands I got hold of that great flask and, applying my feverish lips to its neck, I gulped down avidly the warm water. Much relieved, I handed the flask back to Guerin, who withdrew under the wagon's canvas canopy.

For a while I marched with a lighter stride; then an invincible sense of weariness got hold of me. The strain of keeping awake and on the move became terrific; I suffered so that my mind began to wander. I began to hope for a halt, to strain my ears to hear it better; unable to stand any longer under the martyrdom of the fatigue and lack of sleep, I found myself wishing time and again that a Moorish bullet would end my misery; I fervently envied the wounded who were free to doze under the canvases of the wagons, and the dead whom we had left along the road.

After a time that seemed an eternity the order to halt was repeated from the first to the last ranks of the column. For a few moments I leaned against the front wheel of a wagon, expecting that Captain Burtan would call for me, but I failed to hear or see him. The seat near the team-master was empty. I placed my foot on the axle, grasped the railing which supported the fore part of the canvas canopy, and climbed to the side of the stolid Moroccan who shrank to make room for me; leaning on the wooden back of the seat and partly covered by the canvas, I instantly fell asleep.

The jerk of the wagon setting in motion again roused me, but I drowsily thought that I did not care what happened, that I was going to remain there; my eyes closed again, and I lost consciousness.

I don't know how long I lay there deep asleep, in spite of the continual bumping of the wagon; at length, as in a dream, I heard the raging voice of Burtan: "Brigaud! Where is Lieutenant Brigaud?"

The voice of the Captain sounded nearer and nearer, calling for me all the time—but I failed to move; I was so far out of my senses that I even neglected to pull under the concealing shade of the canvas an outstretched leg easily recognizable on account of the red chasseur breeches and officer's boot.

We tore into the Moors. My rage was so great that I had lost clear vision of what I was doing.

"*Parbleu!* What are you doing perched on that seat?" Burtan growled, close now to the wagon. His rough hand grasped and shook my leg, but I still refrained from moving or giving an answer. Suddenly, with intense relief, I heard Picard snarl:

"*Nom d'un nom*, will you leave that boy alone?" Burtan withdrew his hand, and I relaxed, closing my eyes.

When I wakened, it was broad daylight. The column had stopped.

Much refreshed, I jumped down from my seat and I glanced around. Captain Burtan stood near the first wagon of the convoy, leaning on his walking-stick. I went to him ready to take my medicine, but he received me kindly.

"You are no more under my orders," he announced. "Go to Captain Picard; you will find him among the légionnaires. I wish you good luck, Brigaud," he said, proffering me his hand. His eyes sought mine without anger nor bitterness. In that moment I realized that instead of being purposely abusive as I had surmised, Burtan was simply trying to carry on his duty as he saw it; I gladly shook his hand, but just the same I thanked God for being rid of that martinet.

"Ho, there! The prodigal son is at last into the fold!" Captain Picard greeted me, patting my shoulder. He curtly waved away my thanks and introduced me to a short, smiling lieutenant of the Légion. "Bourdette, Sous-lieutenant Brigaud will assist you in the command of your company."

Bourdette was a friendly soul. He pulled out a small pocket flask, shared with me a last finger of cognac and proffered a precious Egyptian cigarette. "To solemnize your first command in the Légion," he said, slipping his hand under my arm. "Now come to meet your *grogards*."

Bourdette's company had lost one third of his effectives and the *adjutant*. For tactical purposes Picard had split it in two strong platoons. Their lean, tired faces showed the grim firmness of seasoned veterans; while I walked in front of them with Bourdette, I saw their grave eyes

following my every movement, scanning me from head to foot. A grizzled corporal, old enough to be my father, smiled at me, straightening at attention.

"You will take command of the second platoon," Bourdette said, proud because I was evidently impressed by the martial bearing of his men. "You will have no trouble with them; they will follow you under any circumstance."

Shortly after we set out on the march. I was very hungry, but my weariness had faded. The very fact that I had not to worry about mules and wagons, and that no creaking of axles tortured my ears, gave me a feeling of glorious lightness.

Toward noon we reached the Ouled Bou Guerir: a luke-warm ribbon of shallow water running between two bleached stretches of stones rendered blazing hot by the sun. One by one the companies were allowed to drink and fill their canteens; the soldiers feverishly poured water on their heads and dusty garments; for the first time in several hours they smiled relievedly.

A few minutes later we confronted a stretch of sloping hills cut in all directions by deep ravines.

"The Légion should do the scouting on the flanks of the column," a légionnaire said aloud. "The Turcos who are entrusted with that duty can outmarch us and fight as well as us, but just the same, they often are very careless."

A few minutes passed. Suddenly the order to halt rang along the column; the cavalry patrol had galloped back, announcing that a large *harka* was coming from the hamlet of Bou Guerir. Almost instantly the Algerian scouts returned, warning that swarms of tribesmen were coming from right and left.

The river-bed was a very poor tactical position; and Ruef instantly decided to muster the column on a ridge towering at our left, but to shift there the encumbering wagons required time; our légionnaires were ordered to cover the movement.

Captain Picard knew better than to face a Moorish attack on a stony river-bed where bullets were bound to ricochet in all directions, and he quickly led his companies to a slope to the right. We had barely climbed there when Moors on foot and horse appeared like an avalanche in front of us.

Our men rapidly deployed and poured on them a withering fire, but although whole groups of tribesmen fell in ever-increasing numbers, swarm after swarm of warriors filled the gaps torn by our bullets and kept on advancing compactly against us.

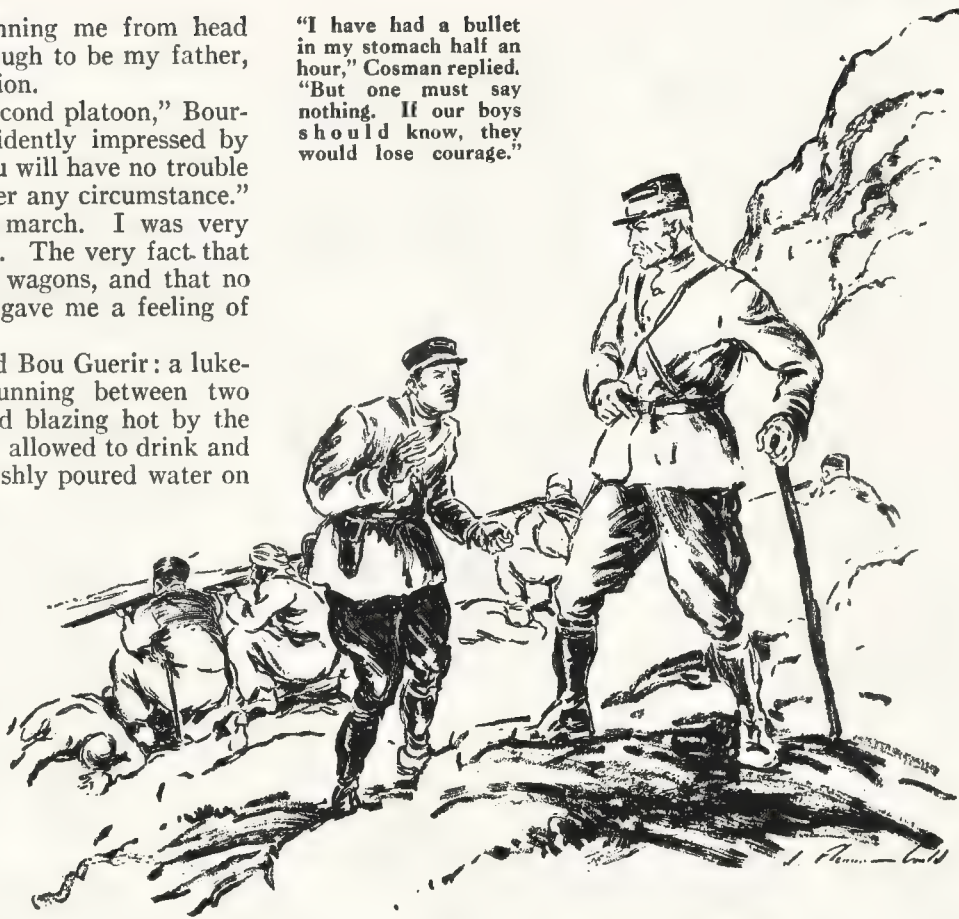
"They run into our line of fire as if they courted death. What ails them?" I asked Bourdette.

"Caïd Eel Heiba must be with them," Bourdette replied. "The Rehamne say that he is invincible. It is a common belief among Moors that, during a moonless night, he was visited and blessed by the Prophet with the *baraka*, the holy unction of Allah."

But in spite of the *baraka* the attack was broken; the horde confronting us wavered. Picard realized that it was time to inflict on them a decisive blow, and ordered a bugler to sound the charge.

We sprang in a headlong rush. Bourdette was not a tall man, but what he lacked in size he more than made up in speed and a feline agility. Being extremely skilled with a sword, he was one of those infantry officers who still persisted in carrying that weapon. He was the first to arrive

"I have had a bullet in my stomach half an hour," Cosman replied. "But one must say nothing. If our boys should know, they would lose courage."



among the Moors: one tribesman after another tried to bar his way, but he brought them down with lightning thrusts.

Charging with lowered bayonets or swinging their guns like huge clubs, the légionnaires routed the Moors and drove them to the opposite slope, where they plunged in hopeless disorder into a second mass of climbing tribesmen. And now with amazing rapidity the soldiers closed their ranks and fired volley after volley into that tangled mob.

Leaving groups of dead and wounded, the Moors ran down the slope, their *djellabas* spreading and fluttering in the breeze, like a multitude of frightened bats. They plunged confusedly to the ravine below and hid among the boulders and thick vegetation. Our losses had been comparatively few; but a most valuable man, the *adjutant* Ronchi, had been almost beheaded by a fierce blow from a Moorish sword.

IN the meantime the Turcos had wiped out with a spirited bayonet attack the groups of Moors coming from the opposite direction which had already advanced to the ridge chosen by Commandant Ruef as our defensive position, and the wagons were already climbing there. Picard realized that we had accomplished our mission; the main problem was now to withdraw before the Moors could surround and overwhelm us.

We began to retreat by companies; one company ran while the other stopped the Moors with a rapid fire; then some hundred yards back, the first company turned and poured volley after volley on the enemy, while the second ran in its turn.

When we reached the bottom of the valley, the Moors had succeeded in coming very close in spite of terrific losses. The company personally commanded by Captain Picard had just reached the center of the river-bed and begun firing; it was our turn to run, but Bourdette grew convinced that as soon as we would turn our shoulders, the

Moors would dart after us, quickly overcome the distance and become mingled with our soldiers.

"There is only one thing to do," he shouted, close to my ear because the noise was deafening. "You will escape first with your platoon, but you will stop after fifty yards only: your fire, together with that of Picard's men, will give me a chance to catch up with you clear of the Moors. Hard-pressed as we are, we can't retreat by companies; we must adopt the slower and surer method of a retreat by platoons. Go, my friend!"

I sprang to my feet, and motioning my men to follow, I ran under a hail of bullets; fifty yards farther, we turned about; the soldiers deployed in a triple line, the first line kneeling, and began firing.

Instantly Picard's men arose and ran toward our left; with a sinking of my heart I saw that in a split second several white and tan Moorish *djellabas* appeared among the blue overcoats of the farthest *légionnaires*.

A confused scuffle loomed at the rear of Bourdette's platoon; then I heard him shouting: "*A moi, la Légion!*"

The whole thing happened in a few seconds, before I could make out what to do. Part of Bourdette's platoon were by then close to my men; without a moment of hesitancy, they turned about and raced back with lowered bayonets.

A desperate, rapid, frantic struggle took place under our eyes. I saw a bareheaded *légionnaire* strike with his bayonet at a tribesman, lose his balance and miss his mark; instantly the Moor hit him with a blow of his dagger, knocked him down. Planting one hand on the ground, the soldier tried to ward him off with the other, but the Moor sprang on him and stabbed him time and again. Then a group of *légionnaires* appeared, closely pressed by a swarm of tribesmen, and carrying among them the inert form of Bourdette.

I felt an electric shock running through my limbs and my flesh prickling; I jumped to my feet, yelled "Charge!" in a strangled voice, and ran toward them, my men racing with me.

We tore into the Moors: my rage was so great that I had lost a clear vision of what I was doing; I fought like a madman, shouting furiously when one of my blows missed its mark, parrying by sheer instinct; once I fell, but a *légionnaire* quickly impaled on his bayonet the Moor who was ready to finish me. I heard Picard's voice in our midst, and I realized that my captain had led his men to the rescue. However, we were so greatly outnumbered that our end would have come soon if Commandant Ruef had not launched a couple of Senegalese companies to the charge.

The impact of the black warriors rolled back for a few paces our men together with the Moors; then the woolly-headed, pitch-black Senegalese loomed everywhere among us and the Rehamne, swinging their guns and *coup-coups* (heavy knives which can cleave a skull with a neat stroke).

The bottom of the valley became a bedlam of white and black soldiers interlaced with tribesmen in desperate hand-to-hand struggles; for once they come to close quarters, Moors are very hard to rout.

At that point Ruef decided to put an end to that dangerous struggle; taking advantage of the fact that the main bodies of the enemy coming from two other sides were still far, he sent an Algerian company which descended from the ridge and began enfilading with deadly rifle-fire the

tribesmen who streamed from the opposite slope and continually increased the numbers of those who were fighting with us. And our artillery sent a couple of salvos which exploded where the Moors were thickest.

That combined action forced at length the tribesmen to give way; they retreated group by group, snarling and full of fight. More than glad to tear ourselves free from them, we withdrew pell-mell to the ridge, where we rallied.

Strange to say, while the *légionnaires* had lost no more than forty men, most of them of the platoon of Bourdette, the losses of the Senegalese, who had fought but a short while, had been appalling. That was due perhaps to the fact that the blacks, who were the most tired troops of the column, had fought clumsily and dispiritedly, and had therefore been easy targets to the ferocious Rehamne.

The square formation was adopted again, with Turcos and Senegalese forming the four sides, and the *légionnaires* firing close to the batteries, from the top of the ridge.

A few minutes later, masses of Moors appeared on the hills all around us. The numbers of the hordes confronting us deeply affected the stolid blacks and the Turcos, whose swarthy countenances assumed an ashen hue.

CAPTAIN COSMAN, commander of the Algerian battalion, stood near the corner formed by his companies, which composed the northern and eastern sides of the square. Being with my *légionnaires* right above and behind him, I was able to see all his movements.

It was peculiar to see how the two types of natives of the Turcos battalion confronted the impending doom; the fatalist Arabs appeared sullen and resigned; because, "if Kismet rules that a man must die, who can rebel against what is written?" But the lanky, hawk-eyed Kabyles, descendants from the ancient inhabitants of northern Africa, were not comforted by the blind fanaticism of their Arabian comrades, because Kabyles are more self-centered and lukewarm in their creed; they mumbled nervously and fidgeted with their guns. Whatever be their religion or language, soldiers in desperate straits turn to their commanders; both Arabs and Kabyles began stealing somber glances at Captain Cosman, who pulled unperturbedly at a stubby black pipe.

Cosman was a middle-aged veteran, with a warm, affectionate soul who considered and treated his swarthy soldiers as overgrown children.

"Well," he said, blowing out a thick puff of smoke, "what are the pleading glances for? Mulay el Foum," he said to an enormous, bony Kabyle corporal, "did your sister ever make such a long face when, to punish her, your father sent her to sleep without kuscous?"

"And that clinging figure there can't be Ahmed ben Raschid, or a djinn" (evil spirit) "must have cast a spell on him," he continued, pointing to a lithe Arab. "Why, Ahmed is accustomed to face the worst dangers smiling. But that fainting fellow there seems worthy of the veil of a maiden."

Loud guffaws of laughter replied to his words. The tension seemed to snap, and the *tirailleurs* to breathe easier.

"The Moors are many," Cosman casually continued, "but we have plenty of bullets for them. 'Besides,' he lied glibly, 'we have received news that the other columns of the Mangin group are drawing close. The foolish Moors dream not that those very hills will soon be their burial-ground.'"



A thunderous cheer followed his speech. Then, following an order from their company commanders, the Turcos knelt and began chatting with each other, pointing and glancing apprehensively at the enemy and the ranges of hills behind them.

For about another hour the Moors kept on rallying; at length their hordes began advancing toward the ridge. Commandant Ruef usually did not trust machine-guns for African warfare, because at that time those quick-shooting weapons were inaccurate, and jammed every few moments; and they consumed an enormous amount of ammunition without inflicting corresponding losses. But considering the numbers of the enemy and the weariness of our troops, he ordered every machine-gun to fire at once; the artillery, too, began to send a shower of shells among the Moors.

The losses of the tribesmen were great; as soon as the smoke and raised earth of every exploding shell faded away, we saw for a fleeting instant wide circular spaces appear amidst their ranks, where men lay sprawled on the ground and others crawled or limped toward the surrounding throngs; but the next instant the gap was filled by gesticulating and howling tribesmen, and the *harkas* continued to advance like a rolling tide.

Commandant Ruef came over to us. He glanced at the ground below and said to Picard:

"There are on this peak a good thirty yards of ground which dominate so well the whole Turcos array that I am going to leave one of your platoons there to help Cosman with their fire. But keep the others ready."

"Ready for what?" Picard snapped.

"To rush to the help of the Senegalese. The poor fellows, being less enduring than the Algerians and the légionnaires, are now awfully exhausted. If the Moors perceive that, they will centralize their attacks on them. Our Senegalese will try to hold their ground, but I don't know how they'd fare against a real drive."

"All right," Picard promised, "if need arises, I will rush with a hundred and fifty odd men to help them, leaving Brigaud and his platoon here."

Less than fifteen minutes later, the Moors closed in on us from every side. As Ruef had foreseen, Picard was soon called to assist the Senegalese. Unable to see what was going on in the position entrusted to the black soldiers, I was listening anxiously to the deafening clamor coming from there, when an awesome sight suddenly attracted my attention to the slopes in front of the Turcos.

The Moors were advancing toward Cosman's men. They were so many that it was impossible to see a gray stretch of rock between *djellaba* and *djellaba*. It was like an immense unfolding carpet, with numberless other tribesmen continually appearing on the summits and crowding on.

They were not running to the attack, just marching, almost leisurely; and their confidence in ultimate success and steady resolution were more disconcerting than a tumultuous attack. Their losses were terrific, but they seemed unshaken by the sight of scores of killed and wounded falling continuously to the ground; fanaticism, faith in the Mrbets' promises of quick healing and even resurrection were evidently steeling them, urging them on.

They descended to the saddle of the ground separating them from the hill where the Turcos knelt firing. They began climbing, the confused rumble of their thousand voices growing in intensity, rapidly becoming deafening.

The Turcos were surrounded by a bluish haze pierced by stabs of fire, which were the visible effect of rapidly

fired smokeless cartridges; my légionnaires, too, were firing unceasingly; but it seemed that nothing could stop the tribesmen. With a sinking of my heart I saw their foremost ranks close in on the Turcos.

Yet Cosman kept on puffing at his pipe, looking intently in front of him, stooping a little. The Turcos' line was being pushed back; all of a sudden a section of it gave way, soldiers falling down or being swept on struggling by a swarm of tribesmen. But instantly Cosman shouted a command. The two platoons which he had kept behind the corner of the array converged on the gap; a brief *mêlée* threw back the Moors; the line was closed again. Another sharp command, a sudden plunge onward of the Turcos; then a couple of steps back, a crashing salvo. The Moors rolled back; military skill and discipline had accomplished almost a miracle.

But at mid-slope the Moors stopped. Ere long those who kept on crowding on their rear lines pushed them onward again. In the meantime tribesmen on the ridge confronting us fired a hurricane of bullets which passed above the Turcos and raked the open line of my légionnaires. Loose formation saved them from annihilation, but four of five men tumbled to the ground, to my right and left.

In that moment I realized that to stand still against odds which seem invincible is harder than to attack, because after all, the frenzy of a charge is the anesthetic of the soldier. Tradition, pride, the deep-rooted teachings of an officer's principles were rooting me to my place; yet in that moment I saw clearly how privates can surrender to fear—in similar cases a sudden panic is something different than plain cowardice; it is rather a frantic surge of instinct which gets the better of self-control under the spur of overwhelming circumstances.

Practical experience teaches that once soldiers are thoroughly bewildered, they become unable to understand the commands of their officers; they are no more able to perceive and hear things as human beings, but resemble stampeding animals. Yet where words fail, the sight of their officers barring their way gun in hand works wonders.

But the légionnaires' faces were stony. Paradoxically, I could not refrain from thinking that they seemed "inspired ascetics, priests of war and ministrators of death."

On the ledge below, Cosman still pulled at his pipe. The faith that his men had in him was infinite, moving. The great swarthy fellows time after time turned their heads and gazed anxiously at him. The fatherly smile of his strong, fearless countenance seemed to reassure them, because they grinned back at him, squared their shoulders and turned to pour bullet after bullet on the enemy.

Trampling above heaps of dead and wounded, the Moorish horde was again climbing. They came closer and closer, then with a thundering shout, they catapulted on the lowered bayonets of the Turcos, pushed them back several yards and dangerously bent their line in several points; soon in two or three places, white and tan *djellabas* and *gandourahs* appeared mingled with the soldiers' uniforms. Fearing that the Turcos could not hold them, I was going to order my légionnaires to join the struggle raging below, when the platoon sergeant who had come to my side divined the command surging to my lips:

"My lieutenant," he said, "we have here a handful of men. From their dominating position they are shooting down droves of Moors, finding a mark with every bullet. If they would join the Turcos in their hand-to-hand struggle, they would just melt into the mob. A charge of thirty-odd men could never rescue a battalion."



Cosman had pocketed his pipe and pranced from one end of the array to the other, plunging among the ranks, shouting command after command. Two or three times groups of Moors pierced the tirailleurs' line, but before they could make out where to strike next, squads of soldiers detached themselves from those points which held better the pressure of the tribesmen. They jumped on them with their guns lifted as clubs, or grasping the long knives that all native soldiers carry.

In each instance the short struggles were brutally ferocious, bared teeth biting at swarthy arms, knives and daggers flashing; tribesmen and soldiers alike, thrown to the ground, were kicked back when they attempted to arise; then a thrust, or the vision of a wide-eyed, convulsed head pulled back and a shiny blade slashing with a jerk at the defenseless throat. In each instance the tribesmen were killed, only few of them asking quarter. But several bodies of soldiers were stretched among the wide, blanketlike garments of the dead Moors.

In each of those clashes Cosman took active part, parrying blows with the heavy stick which he had transferred to his left hand, shooting down plunging enemies with well-aimed bullets. There was no dash, no frenzy or hurry in the moves of that veteran warrior and leader, but every move counted and found its target.

When the last Moorish group was conquered, the first thought of these soldiers who had stopped the leaks in the Turcos' line was for him; they anxiously crowded around him, asking if he had been injured. Simulating rage, he ordered them back to their places.

So it happened that at length, instead of carrying in front of them what remained of the Algerian tirailleurs, the *harka* retreated in utter disorder, leaving behind a trail of dead and disabled. . . .

The attack on the Turcos had just been repulsed when a great uproar came from the other side of the ridge. The gunners who up to that moment had been steadily firing on the gulleys confronting the Senegalese lines shifted the elevation of their pieces to zero (one or two hundred yards).

The next instant a swarm of bare-headed, bewildered Senegalese appeared running, turning now and then to steal furtive glances at the position they were deserting. Suddenly Commandant Ruef appeared on the peak with a few dismounted troopers. He shouted to me to follow and ran to stop the black tirailleurs.

I ran to him with my men and thus I was unable to see what happened later among the Turcos. But before describing what went on the other side of the slope I will mention a sublime deed of Captain Cosman.

WHEN the légionnaires disappeared from the summit of the ridge, the Turcos grew nervous, and their uneasiness rendered their firing excessively rapid and extremely inaccurate; the soothing voice of Cosman rose above the noises of the battle, calmed them.

The Moors were advancing again; but the punishment they had encountered in their previous efforts had sobered them; they came on firing, stopping at every few paces. While this last attack was being beaten off without much effort, a French *adjutant* noticed that Cosman was crouching low, pressing his hand against his stomach; he was going to run to his assistance when the Captain straightened his body, squared his shoulders and stuck again the pipe between his teeth. Reassured, the *adjutant* concentrated his attention on his half company and the Moorish assault.

When the Moors withdrew pell-mell to the ridge from

where they had rushed so fiercely less than two hours ago, a premonition made the *adjutant* turn and stare at Cosman. He realized that something had happened to his leader; the Captain appeared smiling, but ghastly pale. He leaned heavily on his stick. But what alarmed the officer more was a small brown object which lay on the bare ground at his feet; Cosman had not the strength or the wish to recover his pipe.

He knew better than to spread an alarm; he simply ordered an Algerian sergeant to watch the two platoons and ran to Cosman.

As he approached, he noticed that the Captain's face was livid and covered with large drops of perspiration, and his eyes were glassy. Contrary to his habit of addressing kindly those who came to him, Cosman failed to see the officer.

"Captain," the latter asked, "don't you feel well?"

"I've had a bullet in my stomach about half a hour," Cosman replied. "But one must say nothing. If our boys would know, they would lose courage."

THE officer, startled, gazed at his belt. Cosman had slipped a handkerchief between tunic and shirt and had thus stopped a large tell-tale stain from spreading on his coat. But long dark stripes ran down his breeches, reaching the leather leggings.

"But sir," protested the *adjutant*, "you can't carry on like that! Let me attend to you!"

"I thank you, but I order you to say nothing, to do nothing to help me," Cosman firmly replied.

The *adjutant* understood and bowed his head.

Unaware that their commander was dying on his feet, the Turcos were shouting gladly, reviling their enemies. But, if they had learned of Cosman's condition, they would have streamed around him with loud exclamations of sorrow and the Moorish horde would inevitably seize that chance to launch another drive.

It was vital that the Turcos' line should remain solid and untroubled, their enthusiasm high, not only for their own sake but for the sake of the whole column. These were the reasons why Cosman was fighting so stubbornly against pain, nausea and desperate weariness. His eyes half closed, his face an agonized mask, he remarked weakly; "I can't see or hear very well. Tell me, how is the battle going?"

In that moment a fierce struggle was racking the Senegalese part of the square, and the *adjutant* told him so; learning that the *harka* confronting his soldiers had retreated still farther and seemed unwilling to attempt another advance, Cosman's eyes brightened. "Our men are brave—" he slowly murmured.

He stooped lower on his walking stick, and the *adjutant* stood ready to receive him in his arms in the event that he should collapse. But Cosman had a will and a constitution of iron. Much later, when a roar of thundering cheers announcing Mangin's arrival warned him that the day was won, he closed his eyes, moaning, and fell into the arms of the *adjutant*.

The Turcos instantly broke their ranks and surged toward him; only the stern commands of the surviving officers whipped them again in line, but they kept craning their necks to stare at their beloved leader, who was now stretched on the ground while a lieutenant poured iodine and placed a first-aid compress on his wound. Then six tirailleurs were called; they lifted him gently on their shoulders and carried him with infinite care to the dressing-station which was placed near the batteries.

Watch Out for Women

*When Arcola got busy, bootleggers might well quail
and racketeers flee. And a mere husband—let
heaven help him!*

By ARTHUR K. AKERS

Illustrated by Everett Lowry

FOLLOWING the nicely planned demise of Louie the Gyp, and the advice of four friends, the dapper Mr. Johnny Carolli had stepped hurriedly into the nearest railway station and bought himself thirty dollars' worth of distance—a thing destined to influence profoundly the lives and theories of individuals as yet quite strangers to Johnny the Goat, as Mr. Carolli was known among his associates.

Especially was this true when, a week later, a bus from the north paused in Demopolis, Alabama, to disgorge further potential disturbance of the peace there in the shape of one "Big Ugly" Snews.

Somewhat the color of a kitchen stove was Mr. Snews, while physically he was modeled along the general lines of a concrete-mixer—rough, ready, and husky. His clothing, moreover, bore the unmistakable imprint of having been bought just beyond the wrong end of a draw-bridge. And his profession was trouble—for other people.

But to Samson G. Bates, Baptist Hill's dusky man of mortgages and usury, he represented out-of-town ideas, and a profit might be had from listening to him. Mr. Bates never passed up a profit.

"Up Nawth, whar at I been," Mr. Snews was shortly giving both himself and Samson a chance to hear a smart man talk, "dis heah li'l loan shark an' lodge business whut you messes round in down heah wouldn't be nothin' 't all."

"Yeah, but too many dese boys round heah l'arnin' to read an' write," Samson summarized his business difficulties. "An' soon as one dese boys finds out how to read an' figure, dey uses hit wrong. Time wuz you could sell 'em anything, jes' so hit wuz shiny. Now dey's somebody all time puttin' up a squall 'gainst buyin' nothin' or j'inin' nothin'. Specially dey womenfolks, is dey ma'ied."

"Marryin' aint do no boy no good," observed Big Ugly heavily. "Whutever he do after dat, hit make trouble in he home."

"Aint hit so! Take dat Gladstone Smith settin' yander relishin' hisse'f dat fish: Befo' dat widder-woman Arcola marry him, dat boy buy *anything*—jes' so you sign he name fo' him an' lend him de first payment. But now, he aint buy nothin' nor j'ine nothin'."

Mr. Bates sighed gustily at the change in Gladstone, and helped himself to a cigar.

"Gimme one dem seegars too," Mr. Snews repaired an intentional oversight of Samson's. "I c'n smoke anything, is hit got a good draft to hit."

"Whar at you workin' now?" Samson shifted the subject, and himself to windward.

"Waitin' on de table over to de white folks' hotel, twel I gits my awg'nization goin'."

Samson's ears stiffened slightly. "Huccome 'awg'nization'?" he expressed his interest. "Pow'ful hard to do business round heah 'less'n you knows de ropes—an' got yo'se'f good business connections, like wid me."

"Jes' comin' to dat. Gits dis idea from whar at I been up Nawth—an' from whut I jes' seen over to de hotel at dinner-time. Somebody whut make me think I wuz right back up dar dodgin' bullets ag'in."

"Aint know you wuz in de waw."

"I wa'n't. Means li'l bad gent'man, Mist' Carolli, whut aint b'long down heah 't all. Wid li'l tight ov'rcoat on, an' duhby hat. Eve'ything all buttoned up about him. Mouth too. Smokin' cig'rettes an' watchin' both ways all de time. Looks like one dem gangers to me."

Samson's eyes widened. He hadn't read the *Defender* for nothing. But: "Aint in'sted in nothin' pays less'n fawty per cents," he rescued the conversation from alarming and unprofitable channels.

"Uh-huh! An' ever since I gits back heah from de Nawth I sees you fo' whut you is," returned the lately metropolitan Mr. Snews patronizingly. "You aint nothin' but a piker!"

"My cust'mers holler so loud now I caint hardly keep out de jail-house," Samson combined complaint and explanation.

"Whut you needs do is git in wid me—an' git yo'se'f up-to-date—"

"Huccome 'up-to-date'?"

Big Ugly glanced hastily around him, then leaned closer to his pupil and prospective partner. "Means you c'n do whut dem racketeers like dis Mist' Johnny Carolli do: me an' you fawm ouahse'ves into de Baptist Hill Mutual Ben'fit 'sociation—"

"Been tryin' tell you dese boys won't j'ine *nothin'* heah lately—"

"Dey j'ine dis—or wake up somewhars tryin' to figure out 'which is dey haid an' which is de new knot on hit. In dese heah new racketeer 'sociations, de members aint got to bother: no meetin's nor votin' nor nothin'. All dey got do is j'ine an' pay dey dues reg'lar to de 'sociation collector—dat be me."

Samson looked enlightened and 'dubious at the same time. "Yeah," he demurred despite the distant glitter of profits, "but s'pose one dem members git after you wid a razah first—"

A pained look overspread Mr. Snews' unfortunate features. "Look heah, big boy," he strove to penetrate such unpardonable thickness of skull, "you aint git de point. Which is dat eve'ybody skeered of racketeers. An' racketeers aint skeered of nobody. Dat whut keep de racket gwine. Naw suh! I gits me a tight coat an' a duhby hat to w'ar now, an' you jes' watch de memb'ship roll in! Dey be skeered *not* to j'ine."

Mr. Bates lost a fresh round to avarice. "You means," he recapitulated slowly, "dat if nigger aint j'ine, somep'n bound to happen to him?"

"Xactly! An' keep *on* happenin'. Dat whar dey all bein' skeered of *me* come in. Dey j'ines fo' protection, so



"Jes' waitin' fo' you, dat's all!" she shrilled. "Gwine off widout choppin' me no firewood dis mawnin'!"

nothin' *aint* happen to 'em. Sho' makes a man ambitious to sign sudden an' pay prompt."

Samson revolved this revelation of what three months' Northern residence had done for Big Ugly. It surely had broadened him in a business way!

"Old 'sociation's done fawmed," he signified his acceptance of modern methods. "Dollar a week dues from eve'y colored business in town. You collects an' us splits. Dat de only way I c'n affohd to mix up in hit, 'count me bein' so prom'nent in de lodge."

"Sho'! Pres'dent an' collector, dat's me," affirmed Mr. Snews. "Chairman de boa'd an' jan'tor, dat's you. Now I got git on downtown an' wait on table some mo' fo' dat new li'l bad white-folks. Fotch him de wrong eatin'-victuals, an' he liable jerk out he machine-gun an' tie de trigger back. Dem boys is *bad too*!"

GLADSTONE SMITH—long, lank and lazy—dragged himself apprehensively homeward after a day largely given over to sleeping on the seat of the one-mule dray which his wife Arcola owned—and insisted that he operate at a profit.

The last four words describe the root of Gladstone's trouble. Today, for instance, he had taken in a dollar—a dollar that shortly was bound to be the subject of a lot of loud talking.

The ample Arcola was discernible boiling clothes in an iron pot in the yard, as he drew near; a man's straw hat low over her forehead. Which in itself was a bad sign.

Sole and scalded survivors of Gladstone's pre-matrimonial pack of twelve dogs circled the scene warily. An anguished yelp as one of them rapidly remedied having come too close told Gladstone how the domestic wind was blowing. So did Arcola's opening words:

"Jes' waitin' fo' you, dat's all—jes' waitin' fo' you!" she shrilled as she jabbed the contents of the pot viciously with a stick. "Gwine off widout choppin' me no firewood dis mawnin'!"

Gladstone was strengthened in his earlier view that this was no opportune time to discuss the dollar.

But: "How much you got to tu'n in?" she rendered his view void.

"Hauls two trunks fo' de white folks; sho' wuz heavy—" he essayed what deferment of disaster he could.

"Aint keer *how* heavy dey wuz. Whar at de dollar?"

"Jes' comin' to dat—"

"I done already passed hit. Gimme hit."

Gladstone, figuratively, hoisted four white flags and a distress signal. "Spenses done e't hit up," he mumbled.

Arcola's hands went on her hips, belligerently—a further bad sign.

"Whut 'spenses?"

"I—I j'ines de new 'sociation. Big rough boy collects a dollar dues from eve'ybody eve'y week."

"Dollar fo' *whut*?" The hat slid lower over her eyes.

"Hits protection fo' de drayin' business dat way, he say. So aint nobody bust up de dray-wagon an' run off de mule."

"So *who* aint bust up *my* waggin an' run off *my* mule?" Arcola threw a lot of new emphasis into personal pronouns somehow.

"New boy in town, w'arin' tight clothes an' duhby hat," returned Gladstone vaguely. "Boy dat big I says 'yassuh' to. Name's Snews. Come back down heah from up

Nawth an' start workin' over to de white folks' hotel. Eve'ybody skeered of him. He git up de 'sociation on de side."

"Yeah? Well, I aint skeered of him! An' is you pay him *another* dollar, you aint gwine be on de side—you gwine be on yo' back, w'arin' yo' first necktie an' takin' yo' last ride!"

"Dat whut he say too, is I aint pay off reg'lar," defended her husband lugubriously. "Dat he very words! Say gwine 'take me fo' a ride.' Sho' is big an' strong, an' not skeered of nobody: he say so hisse'f."

Arcola turned back to her pot. "Den all you got to settle," she observed grimly, "is who you skeered of de most—me or him!"

Gladstone saw that it was also a good evening for him to dine out. But: "And another thing," his wife halted him before he could act on his hunch, "I wants you to git shet of dat mess of home-brew you's tryin' to make in de shed back dar! You heah me?"

Mr. Smith heard, but preferred not to heed. That home-brew was a delicate part of his private business. In fact, prior to the advent of Mr. Snews, it had led his list of personal worries. But right now association matters had to take precedence. In fact, they loomed larger than ever, when, in the fish-and-barbecue establishment of Mr. Bees' Knees Thompson, some moments later, he found that membership in Demopolis' newest organization was more extensive than exclusive.

Coal-peddler Shakespeare Shackelford, it developed, had just exchanged the prospect of going on a railroad excursion for the certainty of one week's "protection."

Willie Freeman, pressing-club proprietor, had found himself in a peculiarly vulnerable position in that none of his customers would ever take seriously Willie's sign "NoT ResPonsBuL FoR cLoEs while BeiN PREssEd." So he too had surrendered to the racket.

"An' aint nothin' to hit but de dues!" complained Shakespeare. "Not no bands nor unifawms nor pee-rades. Jes' pay out de money, he say, so aint nothin' happen to de coal business."

"Why aint you talk back to him?" Willie asked a question he hadn't been able to answer himself.

"Open yo' mouth an' splay some mo' yo' ign'ance!" Shakespeare rebuked him. "Jes' shows you aint never *been* no-whars! Old 'racket' done moved South fo' de cold weather; dat's whut. You *cain't* talk back to 'em: *eve'ybody* skeered dem bad men . . . Like dat li'l shet-mouthed white-folks jes' come to de hotel. S'pose he wuz to ax you fo' a match, an' you aint got none? You aint got time to git up a good lie 'bout hit befo' he done drap a bomb on you. *Booomp!*—an' whar is you?"

The wall-eyed Willie didn't know. He was too busy hearing that "*Booomp!*"

The effect on Gladstone was bad too. It reminded him that, whatever happened, he was facing a personal disaster at the end of the week now. Husbands for defense, but

not one cent for tribute, was the dangerous way Arcola was twisting a noble sentiment that Gladstone had never even heard of, anyhow. And whatever his decision, he had been promised a "ride"—by Arcola if he paid the dollar dues to Big Ugly—and by Big Ugly if he didn't.

All of which made it a poor time for a third piece of his business to come up again for his attention. Indeed, he had almost managed to forget it when the entrance of Samson G. Bates into the stand recalled it to him.

"Come over heah in de cawner, Gladstone. Craves make talk wid you," Mr. Bates summoned him from his stool at the counter.

Samson's slogan, "I collects or cripples," ran alarmingly through the brain of Gladstone. Enough people were fixing to get mad at him now!

"How dat home-brew you's makin' fo' me comin' 'long?" Samson voiced his question.

"Jes' 'bout ripe now, an' pushin' hit hard. Workin' fine!" Gladstone sought at least to stand in with Samson.

"Whar at you got hit?"

"In de shed back my house."

"Well," and Samson grew hoarsely impressive in his whisper, "you keep hit dar twel times quiets down. Somep'n jes' happen: dey's couple of strange white gent'men gits off de train heah while ago an' staht sniffin' about wid de sheriff like dey wuz Gov'ment men. Is dey bump into dat home-brew, I wants 'em to find hit around yo' place, not mine."

Gladstone's lower jaw thudded against his chest. Looked like there wasn't any way to tell when a boy already had his tonnage of trouble! Just kept piling on.

"You means," he strove to clarify an important point,

"is de Gov'ment gent'men find dat home-brew, hit's mine? An' is dey aint, den hit's yourn?"

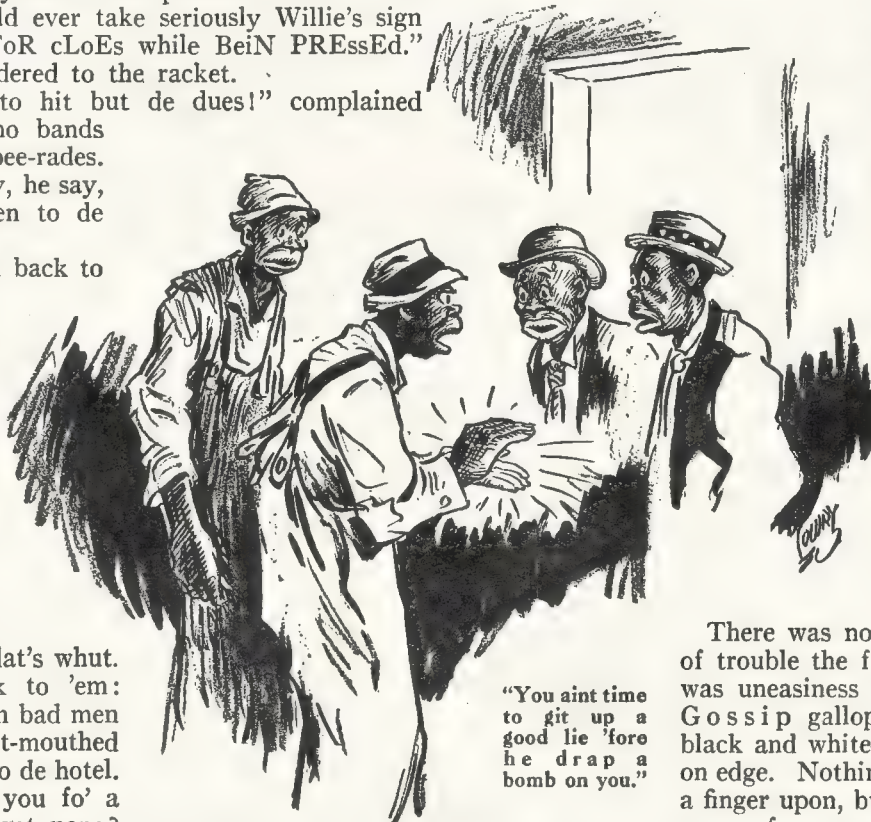
"'Xactly. An' you keep hit dat way twel de road gits cl'ar ag'in, you heah?"

Gladstone heard. But hearing didn't help him; these Government white folks, he reflected, were hard-boiled—just like that little gang gentleman over at Big Ugly's working-place—the one all the time sitting in his room smoking and watching both ways.

There was no lessening of the loom of trouble the following morning. Nor was uneasiness confined to Gladstone. Gossip galloped; and Demopolis—black and white—was beginning to get on edge. Nothing that one could place a finger upon, but there was menace in a new form—personified by the silent

Mr. Carolli: tight-lipped, tight-skinned, slit-eyed, smoking those interminable cigarettes in his room on the second floor of the hotel. Minding his own business and keeping a sharp lookout.

Yet that was the disturbing question: what *was* his business? And whispers going about that the displeasure of a distant gang lord was upon Mr. Carolli, following a



"You aint time to git up a good lie 'fore he drap a bomb on you."

bit of machine-gunning back of a warehouse. Until—"What next?" was the question ever uppermost in the minds of the citizens.

And in the other hotel were two other equally silent strangers. Noncommittal and watchful, biding their time, receiving telegrams, and mysteriously having their meals sent up to their room.

Meantime, to a huge Northern city—and to Mr. Carolli—Mr. Snews felt indebted for a scheme that couldn't have worked better in Cicero. For with the ashen-faced surrender of Jeff Baker and his Burying Society, the last darky business in Demopolis had scuttled fearfully into the fold. And twenty-six dollars was destined to division weekly between President Snews and silent-partner Bates of the Baptist Hill Mutual Benefit Association.

"'Mutual Ben'fit' means eve'ybody benefits," outlined Mr. Bates unctuously to the collector-president over their first happy splitting of the spoils, in the barber shop's back room. "Members gits protection, an' us gits profits! Why aint I think of hit sooner!"

"Aint no money in *no* business twel brains gits mixed up in hit," countered Mr. Snews modestly. "—Nor no trouble twel a *woman* gits mixed up in hit."

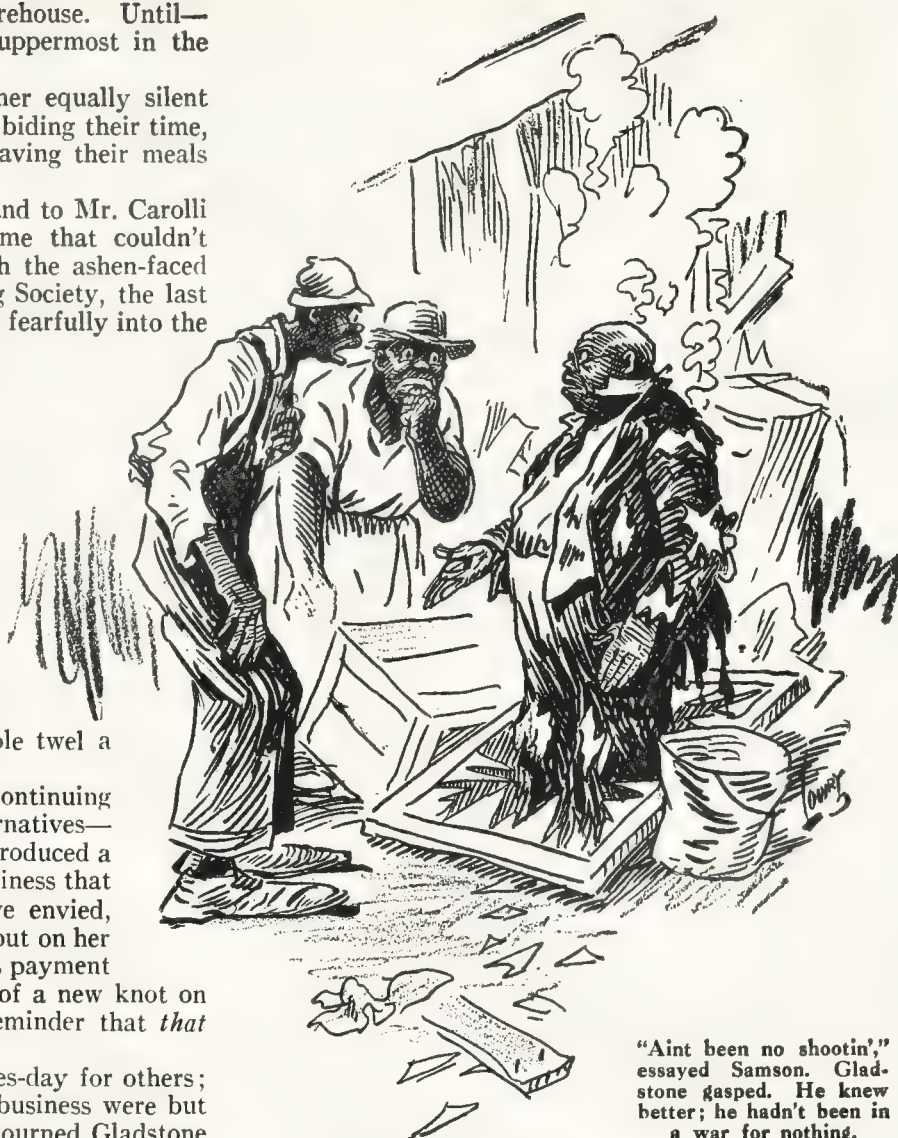
Three days passed, with Gladstone continuing cruelly torn between conflicting alternatives—sharpened by the fact that Arcola had introduced a checking-up system into her drayage business that a cash-register manufacturer might have envied, one that forestalled any hope of holding out on her of any cash receipts for the surreptitious payment of dues for protection. The dull throb of a new knot on her husband's head was his constant reminder that *that* wouldn't work. He had tried it.

And again Friday was coming on: dues-day for others; doomsday for him. If the rest of his business were but doing half so nobly as the home-brew, mourned Gladstone to himself, life might be not only sweeter but longer.

And speaking of longevity, public sympathy about the Square was now beginning to swing toward the two close-mouthed gentlemen still mysteriously having their meals sent to their room at the other hotel from the one domiciling the reputedly murderous Mr. Carolli. If—as was now openly hinted—they were not under-cover prohibition agents at all, but gangland's sinister emissaries in the matter of Johnny the Goat, it was going to be too bad for them, when the tough Mr. Carolli met up with them.

And yet, it could be only their own affair as long as nothing happened. Two tight-lipped strangers had a perfect right to sit in one hotel, and one tight-buttoned little man to sit in another. But when it kept up day after day, and nothing occurred to break the slowly tightening tension, it got on a town's collective nerves. There they sat, seemingly ignoring the presence of each other, yet undoubtedly aware of each other's existence, in a sort of trench warfare, with the zero hour bound to be inexorably nearing.

It was on Thursday evening that domestic matters reached another contributory crisis for the wretched Gladstone. As usual, it started with his home-coming. Most of the catastrophes in his brief but hectic matrimonial career had been so timed. Now as he neared his vine and fig tree, the bunched presence of his dogs beneath his house had a barometric quality that did not escape him. They bespoke the early necessity for a bunch of soft answers on his part. For, no matter whom Arcola was mad at, it would work around to him in the end, he reflected.



"Aint been no shootin'," essayed Samson. Gladstone gasped. He knew better; he hadn't been in a war for nothing.

"Come in dis house, you!" she shrilly preluded the inevitable. "An' tell me when you gwine git dis home-brew 'way from heah!"

Gladstone gagged. Nobody had given him the "high sign" about the two white strangers in town yet. And until then he had his orders from the powerful Samson.

"Done rush dat brew too much now," he dissembled. "Got to go easy wid hit or bust a lot of bottles, workin' hitse'f. You leave hit to me—"

"Aint leave nothin' to you! Is you think I gwine stand by an' go to de jail-house on 'count *you* makin' dat stuff in *my* backyahd heah, you better go dust off yo' brains!"

Spiritually, Gladstone began stepping about like a cat on a hot tin roof. Arcola had already messed him up about the mutual benefit association dues. Let her get to mixing into this home-brew business, and there'd be a new knot in his luck that he couldn't untie.

"Who-all dat brew fo', nohow?" she proved his point by asking exactly the wrong question.

Gladstone grabbed half a handful of coffee grounds from the mill that, luckily, stood on the table beside him, and with them gave himself a choking-spell that seemed ultimately to threaten his life as well as the roof.

"Brains, you sho' is rally yo'se'f in time dat time!" he congratulated that organ when coherent thought was again possible. Then, to Arcola:

"Lemme alone 'bout dat brew twel I gits myse'f straight 'bout dis 'sociation dues. Dey done due tomorrer."



"'Chine-guns!" squalled Gladstone as he dived for a sewer opening. Fruit-stands and bystanders were upset.

"Yeah, an' aint I done tell you you aint gwine pay 'em?"

As far as nature would permit, Gladstone blanched some more at this failure to win her sympathy for his peril.

"An' is dat Big Ugly Snews come messin' round me after hit—or jes' even lay a finger on *my* mule an' my waggin," Arcola started re-emphasizing her views, "I ups an' scalds de hide off him in places he aint even know he's *got*!"

At which Gladstone staggered forth despairingly toward the stand of Bees' Knees. It was just like a woman, he mourned, to talk of scalding a racketeer as though he were mere common clay! When everybody knew that wives talking that way was what often ultimately ended up in their husbands being found in suburban ditches, bearing close personal resemblance to sieves. Indeed, already as he considered the alternatives soon confronting him, Gladstone could hear the Morning Star church bell tolling solemnly for him.

The only way out of it now, he reflected as he shuffled through the dust and the dusk, was to secure somehow the price of tribute; and, unknown to Arcola, to pay it.

"Brains, you done thunk up dem coffee grounds," he feverishly addressed his forlornest hope. "Why aint you rally yo'se'f some mo' an' do somep'n sho' 'nough now?"

And then the miracle! The long-dormant Gladstonian intellect gave actual signs of stirring—until at length one of his liabilities slowly began to look exactly like an asset!

In brief, the home-brew! And why not? When finished and delivered, it was Samson's. And Samson had agreed to pay for it on delivery. True, delivery had been delayed until the identity or innocence of two official-appearing

white gentlemen had been more fully established; but rumor was already attending to that to the point of general acceptance that they were rival gangsters, kept harmlessly housed now by their fear of the portable arsenal of the bold, bad Mr. Carolli. And Arcola was getting restless about the continued presence of the product in her shed. All in all, the stretching of a point by making earlier delivery and collection from Samson might endanger nothing and save everything.

"Old brain's jes' same as Arcola's mule!" exulted Gladstone. "Whack hit 'cross de ribs wid a barr'l-stave long 'nough, an' hit sho' do put out!"

With which happy solution of his problem in sight, Gladstone dived into the establishment of Bees' Knees, to await the hour when Arcola might be counted upon as safely asleep, and the road open for his operations. . . .

The moth-eaten mule of Arcola was duller, if anything, and more averse to movement than usual, several hours later when Gladstone softly opened the door of his stall. Nevertheless, thirty minutes found the reluctant

mule and the exhausted Gladstone drawing up before the shed for loading Samson's brew.

Cautiously and grumbling, Gladstone unbarred its door and crept within. Striking a light was both unsafe and unnecessary in the circumstances. The cases had been stacked close to the door. Confidently he groped his way toward them—a confidence that gave way to a chill question that was suddenly chasing itself up and down his spine as he fumbled fruitlessly for the first case. All he felt was fresh air—in the wrong places. It was uncanny, unthinkable, and—as he recklessly lit a match at last—unanswerable. The shed was empty!

Not a case left, mourned Gladstone in the blackness of soul and night that enveloped him then. Nor an asset. Big Ugly Snews would return—alone—from that so-definitely promised ride!

Dejectedly next morning Gladstone Smith sat hunched on the seat of his dray in his ragged overalls. Dejectedly flopped the spine and spirits of his mule, as into the presence of their wretchedness strode the metropolitan-appearing Mr. Snews, brisk and cold-eyed.

"Kick in now!" stated Big Ugly crisply. "One buck. Due today—so aint nothin' happen to you."

Something in Gladstone that had been very sick anyhow, died just here. "A-a-aint got no dollar," he mumbled.

"Says which?" Mr. Snews tried to believe what he heard.

"Says pay you nex' Sat'day"—hopelessly.

"Whut you think I is—de store-man?" snapped Mr. Snews. He seemed to increase in size and weight, and to darken. "Boy," he rumbled, "aint nobody never *told* you

whut happens to anybody whut gits behind in dey dues to de 'sociation?"

Gladstone's expression and attitude indicated that they had. But he couldn't do anything about it.

"—Hit's gen'ally about two days befo' dey folks starts lookin' fo' dem after dat," Big Ugly pursued an unpleasant subject unpleasantly. "An' dey aint no comfort to 'em no mo' when dey *does* find 'em. Which is somep'n you better think about li'l mo' while I's checkin' up wid de members down Decatur Street heah now."

But mere thinking had long passed the point of doing Gladstone any good. That coffee-grounds inspiration was the last real job his brain had turned out.

Then, as though to prove that hard luck absolutely ganged a boy, when once it got started, the militant figure of Mr. Snews was replaced in his view by the oncoming one of "Bugwine" Breck—Bugwine the peon, so long and hopelessly in debt to Samson G. Bates in the matter of a loan of four dollars that he had sunk to the status of a mere errand-boy in Samson's service.

"Mist' Bates say he want you to come round an' see him," Mr. Breck delivered himself of his message. "He all swoll' up 'bout somep'n."

AT which Gladstone began to remind himself of the man who had his teeth filled in the morning and then committed suicide in the afternoon. Facing Samson now—while awaiting the fatal return of collector Snews—would amount to the same thing. It would soon take a cat to be equal to the accumulating demands for his lives! Besides, he couldn't tell Samson that the home-brew for which Samson had furnished the raw materials had mysteriously disappeared. That revelation alone would be good for hospitalization on a big scale. Samson collected or crippled, whether it was for loans or malt.

"Is I aint come back, Shakespeare, you take home de mule," he added his own to the world's list of Famous Last Words.

Then slowly Gladstone set forth in the wake of Bugwine for the eyrie of Samson, back of the barbershop; while open-mouthed and with awe those who had heard of his failure to pay his racketeering dues watched him go.

Even as they watched, things began to cloud up. From Decatur Street appeared Big Ugly Snews, like a wolf on the trail of Gladstone: Gladstone quickened his pace. Something in the situation seemed to draw spectators from out thin air. Curbs were filling. Nervous giggles broke out here and there, accentuated as along the opposite sidewalk there came strolling two strange white gentlemen—headed, with a sudden loss of fear, it seemed, in the direction of the other white folks' hotel.

But to Bugwine Breck, afar off and open-mouthed, was it given to divine first what was in the making, as he glimpsed the tight-lipped and terrible Mr. Johnny Carolli slip furtively through the side entrance of his own hotel, and step forth in the direction of the two strangers.

From his vantage-point the now frozen-facultied Bugwine saw and sensed the inevitable meeting. The thing that the town had been dreading for a week was about to occur! By accident, but none the less terrible for that.

Then—the fusillade!

Not the six or more shots of a mere revolver battle, but the fast-following detonations of a barrage.

"*'Chine-guns!*" squalled Gladstone, diving for that peace-time substitute for dug-outs, a length of sewer-pipe.

The street was suddenly alive with colored boys—leaving it. Theories, fruit-stands and bystanders were upset. Congestions developed behind the best tree-trunks and up the nearest alleys!

With the barrage yet popping, Gladstone shot farther

into his sewer-pipe—only to meet in its darkened middle a large and similarly minded gentleman. Screaming in mortal fear, they thereupon fled from each other, by the ways in which they had come.

Indeed, anti-evolution legislation in three Southern States was given a set-back by the later-garnered reports of how the terrified Gladstone went from sewer-center to tree-top in one mad motion! While revised opinion of the bravery of racketeers dated in Demopolis from the spectacular departure of the sewer's other occupant, Mr. Big Ugly Snews, fleeing wildly out Ash Street.

Yet for the arboreal Gladstone there remained other and greater surprises. For scrambling awkwardly down from a still-taller tree, as an inexplicable development began to take place in the street below, appeared that would-be Capone of Baptist Hill, Samson G. Bates, torn as to trousers and chastened as to spirit—a Mr. Bates who clung firmly to his belief that he had been shot, yet was bewilderedly unable to prove it. And his bewilderment was only aggravated by the actions of the two strange white gentlemen, who were at the moment engaged in dragging something scared and green-complexioned from beneath the barbershop porch near-by.

"Uh-huh! We got you, Johnny!" the pair were exulting quietly. "And *we're* going to take *you* for a ride this time—back home to tell the nice judge all about Louie the Gyp! Just waiting around town here for the extradition papers was all that delayed us. C'm' on!"

All this while the fuddled Samson was thrusting an investigative nose through the door of his hang-out that he had wrecked in the recent haste of his leaving it. And his ensuing words to Gladstone didn't make sense. "So *dat's* hit! An' you sho' is save yo'se'f on a tech-ni-cal-i-ty dat time, long boy! I told you—"

Then the newly arrived Arcola was blotting out the rest of his remarks by a panted-out question that but added new mystery to it all.

"Who dat do all dat shootin'?" she pressed.

"Aint *been* no shootin'," essayed Samson.

Gladstone gasped. He knew better; he hadn't been in a war for nothing!

BUT it was the shaken Samson's next sentence that let in at last the light—explaining the misunderstanding beneath which one bold little gangster had sought ignominious shelter underneath a barbershop, while a local imitator was yet fading vociferously into the distance. And racketeering was dead in Demopolis.

"Dat wa'n't no shootin'!" elucidated Samson. "Whut skeered dem gangsters to death wuz dat *home-brew* dat Gladstone delivers in my back room las' night widout tellin' me. 'Bout three cases of dem bottles gits to workin' an' *goes off*, mighty near all at once. Sounded like a whole war—"

Feebly the Gladstonian intellect twitched at this, and was still. He hadn't delivered any home-brew!

Until in the new bewilderment of Arcola that matched his own he saw the solution to all the rest:

"*Samson's?*" she was muttering thickly. "How I know dat wuz Samson's home-brew when I hitch up an' hauls hit over heah to plant on him last night so *he* git caught wid hit, instead of me, wuz dem strange white gent'men Gov'ment men, 'stead of detectives from up Nawth like dey done tu'ned out to be!"

But the chastened Samson seemed inclined to close and dismiss the whole sad chapter with what sounded suspiciously like a quotation:

"Dey aint no trouble in business," muttered Mr. Bates reminiscently, his eyes fixed upon a dwindling dust-cloud in the distance, "twel a *woman* gits mixed up in hit!"

Six Seconds Dead

The climax of this amazing mystery story by the gifted author of "Peter the Brazen" and other noted stories is dramatic in the extreme.

The Story So Far:

THE newspapers were black and strident with the amazing story: Anthony Storm, condemned to pay with his own life for the murder of Burke Nally, had suffered six seconds of high voltage and was alive!

Injections of adrenalin and of camphor, and the prompt use of the pulmotor were responsible.

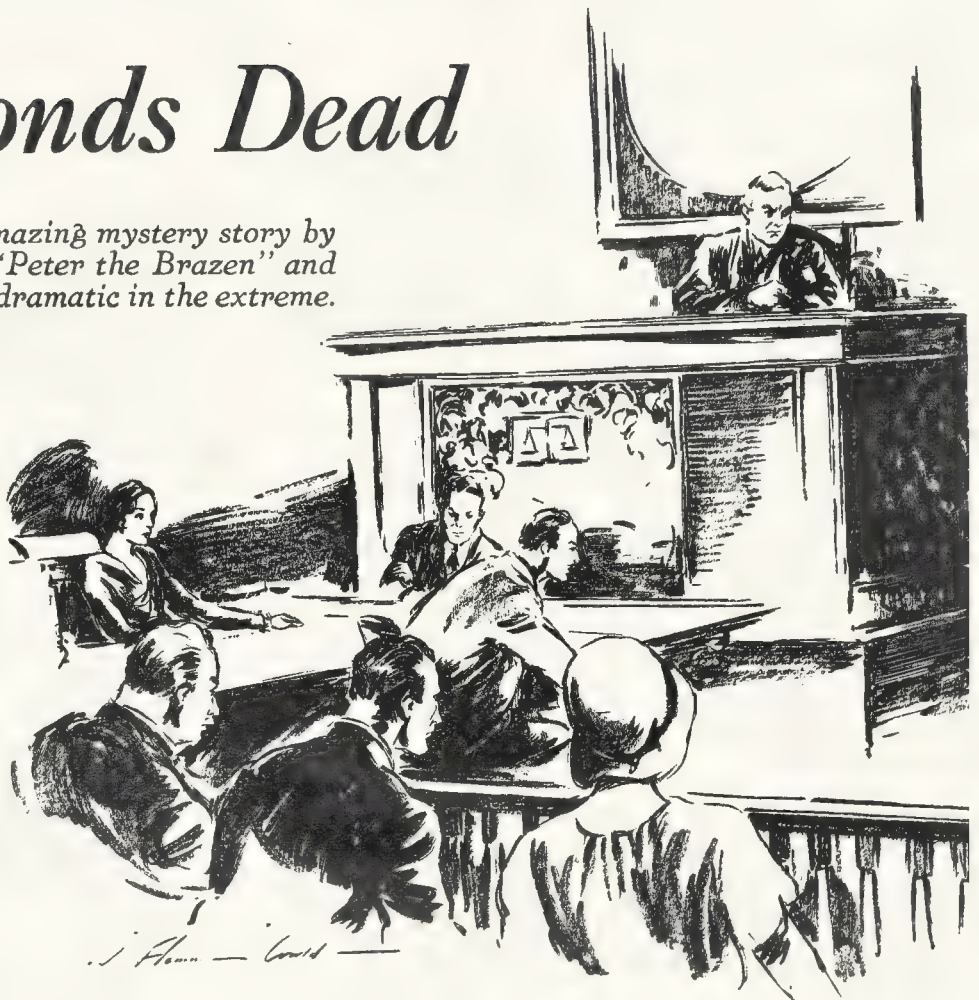
Burke Nally had been the only son of old Joshua Nally, retired steel-master and multimillionaire. Seth Brangwyn was Joshua Nally's nephew, and secretary to Elery Gans. Elery Gans was, in turn, secretary to old Joshua Nally. It was a closely knit little group that started a golf-game that fatal day.

The foursome had paused in the locker-room for a highball. Anthony Storm had furnished the Scotch, and a locker-room steward named Clyde Tweed and known by the members as "Smiles" had brought the mineral water, glasses and ice with which the highball was completed.

Finishing their drinks, the four men went out to the first tee. Burke Nally, in the act of driving off, dropped dead. His death occurred, it was estimated, about five minutes after he had finished his drink. As he had been in excellent health, his death aroused immediate suspicion. What remained of his highball was analyzed and found to contain a trace of cyanide of potassium. Smiles had testified at the trial that he saw Anthony Storm drop something into Nally's glass. On that testimony, largely, Storm had been convicted and sent to the chair. . . . Now fatally injured in an accident, Smiles had testified that his testimony was perjured, but he died before he could name the man who hired him. . . .

Storm was pardoned, and recovered. A little later he received a huge legacy and swore to devote it to the rescue of persons unjustly accused of crime. His opportunity came soon. For old Joshua Nally himself dropped dead one afternoon as he was having tea with his niece Corrine Brangwyn and his secretary Elery Gans. In his stomach also cyanide was found; and the poison was discovered in the cup-cakes, which Corrine had herself prepared.

So Corrine was accused of the murder. And Storm, who had loved her, devoted himself heart and soul and pocketbook to her defense. Yet the circumstances bore heavily against her. And the hard-boiled young newspaper man Jimmy Borden, who had gained Storm's confidence, and knew more about the case than any of his confrères, was convinced of her guilt. For a bottle that had contained ferrocyanide was found along with apparatus and other reagents for evolving cyanide. And the bottle carried Corrine's fingerprints. (*The story continues in detail:*)



JIMMY MULLEN, reclining in his corner of the taxicab, puffed savagely at his cigarette and said:

"You should have flashed that emerald owl on them, Mr. Storm."

Storm, a mysterious shadow, answered: "No. It would have proved nothing."

"How about fingerprints?"

"We will find no fingerprints."

"Why not?"

"We found just what we should have expected to find. The chances against our finding that paraphernalia in the potato cellar were a million to one. Gans knew it, but even with the odds a million to one in his favor, he played safe—saw to it that no fingerprints but Miss Brangwyn's would be found."

"Gans!" Jimmy exploded. "It wasn't Gans! It was Miss Brangwyn! For a minute there, in the murphy vault, I was bluffed. But it's as clear as a raindrop now. She thought she'd fool everybody with that bunch of junk. She didn't fool me. She didn't fool anybody but you!"

"Why," Storm asked, "did she tell us about the murphy vault?"

"That's why—to fool you!"

"I suppose," the lawyer said dryly, "she rubbed that mold on Gans' pants-leg and shoe?"

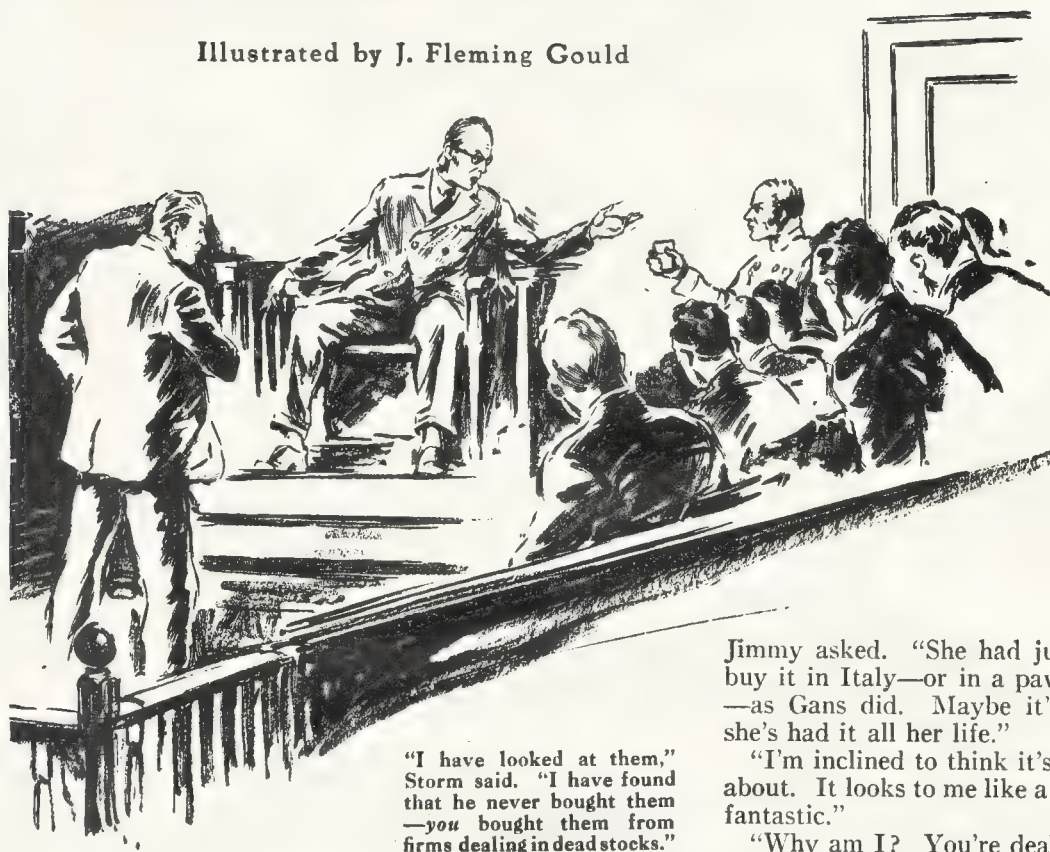
"That was nothing but a lucky break," Jimmy argued. "She'd have found some reason for sending you into that murphy vault if there hadn't been mold on Gans' pants! She had to have you find that owl!"

"That's pretty wild, Jimmy."

"I don't pretend to understand women," Jimmy answered. "I don't even pretend to understand sane women. How can any man say what a woman who has planned

By GEORGE WORTS

Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould



"I have looked at them," Storm said. "I have found that he never bought them—you bought them from firms dealing in dead stocks."

and committed a murder is going to do? Look here, Mr. Storm. I say that Miss Brangwyn planned and executed that murder—thinking, naturally, that she would not be found out. When she was found out, she did some quick thinking. She knew you still loved her. At least, she banked on it. And she knew that you were the one man who might get her out of this pickle. Look how she dramatized it all! She saw herself being defended by a man that the public thinks has had a very raw deal."

"Does that prove she murdered her uncle?"

"Wait a minute! She knew you had inherited Martin Tulifer's millions. She knew if she played on your sympathy, you would go into court and fight for her. And she knew, if she could once get you into court, you'd spend every dime of that ten millions getting her a verdict. You say Gans is clever. Hell, *she's* a genius! I say, she's a modern Lucrezia Borgia."

"It doesn't hold water," Storm answered. "How do you account for the flash of green I saw in Gans' hand in the locker-room the day Burke Nally was murdered—and the flash of green she saw in his hand this afternoon just before her uncle dropped dead?"

"How certain are you," Jimmy asked, "that you actually did see a flash of green in Gans' hand that day?"

Storm did not answer immediately; and when he did, it was with evident hesitancy. "I'm not at all certain, Jimmy. At the time, perhaps I was. A great many trying things have happened since then to upset my memory."

Jimmy pounced on that. "We aren't even certain, then, that you saw a flash of green in his hand. But we can bank on it that she read about it in the papers; so, when the necessity arose, she invented a green flash to fit into her own glib little story."

"And she did all this plotting, planning and scheming," Storm asked, "after she was caught murdering her uncle?"

"Absolutely!"

"Where did she get this emerald? Did she anticipate she might need it—and had it handy?"

"Why not? You keep saying Gans is a master of infinite detail. Why can't we claim the same about her?"

"Dangerous little baubles of this kind," Storm answered, "were popular in Italy before and during the Renaissance. Gans spent a winter in Italy. He is mad about Italian art, literature and so on. I say he bought the emerald in Italy at that time."

"You can trace it?"

Jimmy suggested.

"I'm going to trace it."

"She was educated in Europe, wasn't she?"

Jimmy asked. "She had just as good an opportunity to buy it in Italy—or in a pawnshop in Paris or Berlin, say—as Gans did. Maybe it's a family heirloom. Maybe she's had it all her life."

"I'm inclined to think it's too valuable not to be known about. It looks to me like a museum piece. Jimmy, you're fantastic."

"Why am I? You're dealing with a woman who everybody but you is certain killed her uncle with poisoned cakes. You have absolutely nothing to go on but her own statement that she did not kill her uncle—and all this hooey about flashes of green. Didn't they find cyanide in every cup-cake, including the ones she brought to you?"

"Why did she bring them to me?"

"Because she's clever. Her only hope was to make you believe in her. She made a big play for your sympathy—and got it! She knows you'll do your damndest to get her a verdict. She doesn't care what anyone else thinks. The phoniest part of her whole argument is the cup-cakes. If Gans had somehow sneaked cyanide into them while she wasn't looking, he knew she might have eaten one and died herself. Then where would he have been? It would have been self-evident that he murdered both her and her uncle."

"Didn't you hear her say that she never eats anything at tea?"

"Well, isn't that fishy? Do you really believe Gans would bank on that—a man as careful as he is?"

"Yes, Jimmy. He banked on it because he was so careful. He knew that Miss Brangwyn had eaten nothing at tea over a long period. He could safely bank on her eating nothing this afternoon. Perhaps he did take a slight chance. We have got to assume that he was a very desperate man that afternoon."

"No," Jimmy said; "I can't assume it, because it hasn't been proved. All we know is what she said. I insist that Gans wouldn't've dared bank on no one eating those cakes but old man Nally. A servant might have eaten one."

"And put another murder, as Gans saw it, at Miss Brangwyn's door."

"She herself," Jimmy argued, "might have eaten a crumb. You know how women are when they cook—always tasting. And the ones who never eat much at meals are the heavy tasters."

"Cup-cakes," Storm answered, "are baked in little tins. They come out clean. There aren't any crumbs."

Jimmy sighed hopelessly. "You're sold on that girl, Mr. Storm. Nothing I can say will unsell you. You're betting everything on your hunch. So am I. I was betting everything, not long ago, on my hunch that you were an innocent man. Even when they strapped you in the chair and turned on the juice I stuck to that hunch. I was right then, wasn't I?"

"I'd say that you are unfairly prejudiced against Miss Brangwyn, and don't like her."

"I'm prejudiced," Jimmy admitted, "but not because I don't like her. She's one of the loveliest women I ever saw. She has beauty and charm and personality. I can understand any man falling hard for her. I might fall for her myself if I wasn't married. Sure! A few hundred years ago, I might have fallen for Lucrezia Borgia, too!"

Jimmy snapped his cigarette out of the cab window and said imploringly:

"Mr. Storm, won't you back down before it's too late? You're blind! You're crazy about this girl. You refuse to think anyone so lovely, so dainty, so feminine could be capable of murder. As I see this, Martin Tulifer handed you a big responsibility when he willed you all that jack. I don't think you're shooting straight with him when you use it defending a girl who might just as well have the wet blood of her uncle on her hands!"

Storm did not answer. The taxicab raced on through the rain toward Steel City. Jimmy lighted a fresh cigarette—glanced, in the glow of the flaring match, at his companion. Storm's dark, mysterious eyes were on him. There was a queer smile on the lawyer's lips. Jimmy felt decidedly uneasy as the flame died out. In an unsteady voice, he asked Storm whither they were headed now.

"Professor Royal Ingal's."

"I don't place him, Mr. Storm."

"He is the curator of the antiquities department of the Steel City museum."

"Do you know him?"

"Only by reputation. He is one of the world's foremost authorities on Italian art and history."

"All he can tell you," Jimmy said, "is approximately when and where the emerald owl was made. What we want to know is, who bought it? Find the buyer, and you'll find the murderer. It ought to be easy to trace. I don't know much about such things, but it looks like a museum piece to me."

"Before we see Professor Ingal," Storm said, "we'll stop at Ben Carewe's and have him look for fingerprints—in case."

"We needn't bother," Jimmy said. "I swiped a bottle of that fingerprint powder. But if we do find fingerprints—they won't be Gans'."

CHAPTER XII

IT was almost one o'clock when the taxicab pulled up before a low white house with green shutters a block north of the Steel City Museum. All the windows were dark. Storm told the cab-driver to wait.

Five minutes of insistent ringing at the doorbell suddenly caused a light to beacon forth at a top-floor window. Hall lights presently flashed on, and were followed by bright illumination as the porch-light glowed.

The door opened a few inches; and an old woman, holding a brown bathrobe about her, peered out and brushed straggling gray hairs from her eyes. This was, she conceded, Professor Ingal's residence; but the Professor was abed. She was his housekeeper, and would not wake him up unless the museum was on fire.

"Tell him," said Storm, "that Anthony Storm wishes to see him on a matter quite as urgent as a burning museum. Tell him that a human life is involved, or we would not dream of disturbing him at this hour."

"You can come in and sit down in his study," the housekeeper said reluctantly; "but I won't promise that the Professor will see you."

She conducted the two men into a cozy, disorderly room full of books, and turned on a light over a littered desk.

When they were alone, Jimmy quickly seated himself at the desk, removed from his pocket the bottle of stolen fingerprint powder, and said eagerly:

"Let's have that owl and settle this before he comes."

"You won't find a mark on it," Storm warned him.

But he opened the box and rolled out the mysterious green gem onto a sheet of white paper. Jimmy searched through the litter on the desk and found a pair of tweezers and a small magnifying-glass. Taking care not to touch the emerald with his fingers, he dusted it with the powder, blew the powder off—and grunted with disappointment.

"Not a mark!" he growled, and dusted the back of the emerald owl. He was staring hopefully through the glass when Professor Ingal came in. . . .

The curator of antiquities did not, as a matter of fact, come in just then. He stopped in the doorway adjusting a pair of steel-rimmed spectacles to his eyes and staring with ill-suppressed disfavor at the two intruders.

Jimmy looked up from his fruitless inspection and saw a man of fifty-five with an iron-gray beard, piercing steel-gray eyes and an air that was not at all hospitable. He wore a black dressing-gown.

STORM began to apologize for the necessity of awakening him at this hour. Professor Ingal curtly interrupted:

"Aren't you Anthony Storm, the man who was tried for the murder of Burke Nally and was saved at the last minute from death in the electric chair?"

"It was six seconds," Storm answered, "past the last minute. Yes, I'm Anthony Storm."

Professor Ingal did not return his smile. He stared at Storm, and Jimmy realized that the curator of antiquities was going to be a very difficult man to handle.

"What do you want?"

Storm briefly told him. "Joshua Nally was murdered this afternoon. Cyanide of potassium was found in cup-cakes his niece Corrine baked for his afternoon tea and I have undertaken to prove that she has been made the victim of a diabolical plot."

Professor Ingal said nothing, but his eyes became even less friendly than before, and his mouth hardened.

"Of what interest can this be to me?"

Storm explained—gave him in capsule form the entire story of the day's activities. "I brought the emerald owl to you," he said, in conclusion, "because I am sure you are the one man who can tell me something about it."

Professor Ingal walked to the desk, scarcely glanced at the emerald owl, and said irritably:

"I can't see what possible assistance I can give you, Mr. Storm. I have a deep aversion to being involved in any way in a sensational murder case. I would prefer that you take this owl to some one else."

Storm said quickly: "After all, Professor, a young woman's life and liberty are involved."

The Professor glared at him a moment longer. "You must give me your word that my name will not be used in any way if I give you my opinion."

"Your name will not be mentioned," Anthony Storm assured him.

Professor Ingal seated himself at the desk, picked up the owl, examined it for not more than ten seconds, and said:



"I will pay you," Storm suggested, "fifty thousand dollars. If you succeed, another fifty thousand." Professor Ingal stared at him with unblinking incredulity, and sat down heavily in his chair.

"This is Florentine. It was made at about the time of Cellini. I have seen poison birds and animals carved from malachite, lapis lazuli, jade, ruby, sapphire matrix, emeralds and emerald matrix. The rarest ones are panthers and lions."

"Is this a museum piece?"

The Professor got up, went to a glass case against the wall, pawed around in it and came back with a little green object in his hand, which he tossed down beside the emerald owl.

Jimmy stared, gasped. It was another emerald owl, although not a duplicate. It was smaller, broader, but like the other, grassy green.

"You can readily see they are not identical," Professor Ingal said. "They are slightly different, but they are by no means rare."

"How do they work?"

"Liquid poison is introduced by unscrewing the head. It is ejected by squeezing the feet together. A small plunger is actuated, and a jet of poison is shot from a pin-hole just above the beak."

"Will you please demonstrate it?"

Professor Ingal palmed the owl Storm had brought him. "It was held in the hand like this," he explained. "The beak protrudes through the two middle fingers of my hand—thus. Now, by placing one leg against the heel of my palm and pressing against the other leg with my thumb, the plunger works and the liquid squirts out."

His closed fist was aimed at the desk blotter. As Jimmy watched with big eyes, he saw a round wet spot form on the blotter.

"There's your poison," said the Professor. "It was a simple, direct and, in my opinion, a somewhat unimaginative way of killing your enemy by squirting poison into his food or wine. Its virtue lay in its compactness, its invisibility and its accuracy. With a little practice, a man could shoot this stuff into a cup across the table. These things came into use sometime after poison rings lost their popularity."

"Would it be difficult," Storm asked, "to trace this to its purchaser?"

"It would be impossible," was the answer. "I have picked up poison birds and poison animals of this kind in curiosity shops, antique shops and pawnshops in most of

the large cities in Europe. I even found one in a pawnshop in San Francisco."

"But you are sure this is Florentine?"

"There is no question of its being Florentine."

"How would you go about tracing it?"

Professor Ingal yawned pointedly. "I one time undertook to trace a scarab for a very rich collector interested in Egyptology. It took me two years of solid work."

"This must be traced to its purchaser within a month."

The Professor made a hopeless gesture with his hands. "Even the preliminary work would take longer than that."

"The task," Storm pointed out, "would be somewhat simplified by the knowledge that one of two people made the purchase. I can supply you with a photograph and a complete description of each. I can also secure for you the exact dates when each was abroad."

"I am not a detective, Mr. Storm."

Storm asked bluntly: "Are you a rich man, Professor Ingal?"

"What has that," the curator of antiquities asked coldly, "to do with this matter?"

"I am prepared," Storm answered, "to make it very well worth your while to find out who bought this owl."

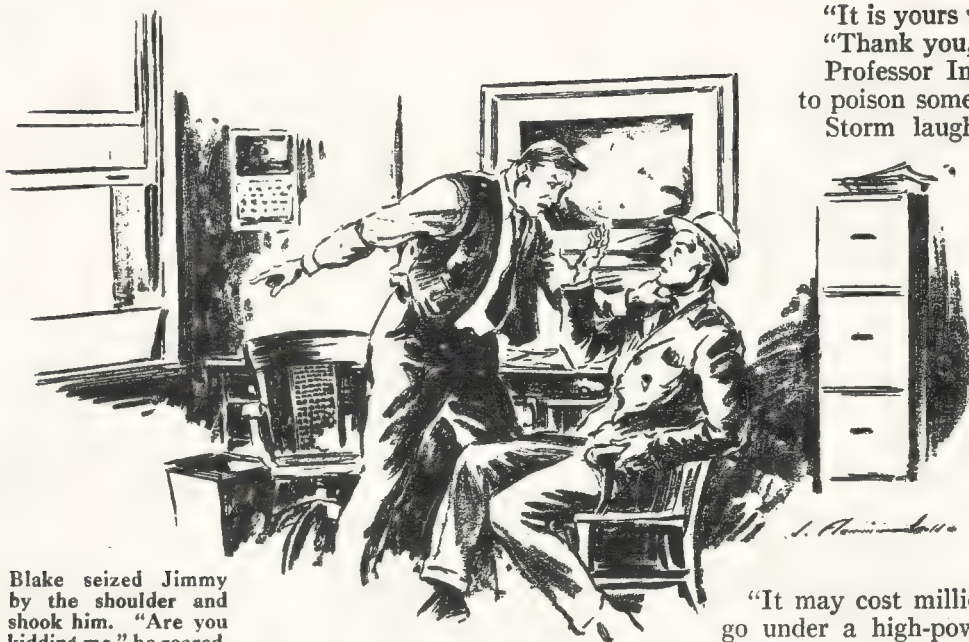
"I am not interested, Mr. Storm."

"A man engaged in your kind of work," the lawyer argued, "can always use funds. I don't know what your dreams are, but I do know archeologists. I am asking for only one month of your time. I will place an unlimited expense account at your disposal. You can hire assistants—detectives—experts along your own line—by the score. All I ask is that you catch the next fast ship to Europe and do everything in your power, regardless of expense, to find out who bought this emerald."

"You don't realize," Professor Ingal declared, "what you're asking. It is monumental. I am afraid no figure you can name would tempt me."

"Supposing," Storm suggested, "I name one, anyhow. If you will go abroad for one month and take charge of this search I will pay you, whether you succeed or fail, fifty thousand dollars. If you succeed—another fifty thousand!"

Professor Ingal stared at him with unblinking incredulity. Before he could even weigh an answer, the lawyer



Blake seized Jimmy by the shoulder and shook him. "Are you kidding me," he roared, "or aren't you?"

said: "And if the expenses of hiring assistance and so on should run over a hundred and fifty thousand—I'd consider I was getting the information at a bargain price."

The curator of antiquities sat down heavily in his desk chair. He looked pale, of a sudden. He wiped the flat of one hand quickly over his forehead. He picked up the emerald owl and looked from it to Anthony Storm.

"Do you mean to say," he asked tremulously, "you would pay a—one quarter of a million dollars for information pertaining to the purchase of this—this thing?"

"Willingly!"

Jimmy was also pale and perspiring. It seemed wrong. He wanted to say so. Instead, he leaned heavily against a corner of the desk and said to himself: "What, in God's name, am I going to write for tomorrow's paper? I don't dare mention one-tenth of all this!"

"This thing," the curator of antiquities was saying; "it isn't worth it. It's junk. I wouldn't pay you three hundred dollars for it. It's a very poor emerald. Look at it!"

Storm assured him, dryly, he didn't care a damn about its value to a collector. "I wouldn't care if these sold for three dollars a gross. The fact that it isn't rare, a museum piece, will make an investigation a little harder. Will you leave for New York by train, or plane if necessary, to catch the first five-day ship for Europe?"

Professor Ingall nodded weakly. "Yes, I'll do it."

"I'll give you a letter of credit for one hundred and fifty thousand dollars," Storm said, "which you can deposit for collection in any European bank. I'll leave two units of fifty thousand each in escrow in the Steel City National, one payable on your demand thirty days from now, the other payable to you on my order—if you get the information. You have a thirty-day time limit. Is that satisfactory?"

The curator, speechless, nodded.

"I'll secure photographs of the two people under suspicion," Storm briskly went on. "This investigation must proceed under absolute secrecy. This entire conversation is confidential."

Professor Ingall again nodded. "I wish to stipulate that I am, under no conditions, to take the witness-stand or be mentioned in any way."

Storm extended his hand to seal the agreement with a handshake.

"I should like," he said, "to buy this other owl."

"It is yours with my compliments."

"Thank you, Professor. Is it in working order?" Professor Ingall nodded. "Yes. Do you intend to poison some one?"

Storm laughed and dropped the gift into his pocket. "Not tonight. By the way, will you have an analysis made of the liquid in that owl? I'm sure it's a solution of cyanide, but I wish to make doubly sure."

"I will make the analysis in my own laboratory and let you know the results tomorrow."

Back in the cab, the lawyer said: "We're going back to Malvern now. Unless I'm mistaken, you'll want to argue the rest of the night."

"I sure will," Jimmy said grimly. "You're going to spend money on this case, aren't you?"

"It may cost millions," Storm agreed. "Gans' life will go under a high-power microscope. Every act he committed, every financial transaction he took part in, will be looked into. I will have, literally, hundreds of men poking into every niche and cranny of his past."

Storm gave road directions to the driver, settled back and started a cigar. He waited. He didn't have to wait long.

"And it's a wild-goose chase!" Jimmy exploded. "You're going to spend a quarter of a million of Martin Tulifer's hard-earned jack on that owl alone. And what are all these million-dollar investigations going to prove? That I'm right and you're wrong! It's a crime!"

"You forget," Anthony Storm answered quietly, "that the income on ten million dollars is around six hundred thousand a year."

Jimmy softly whistled. "And to think that I can't afford a five-hundred-buck operation for my wife!"

"Look here," Storm said, "for the next month or longer, you're going to be the busiest reporter in the United States, because you are going to be the only reporter to have access to me. In other words, I like you and I trust you to the limit. I want you to do me a favor. Let me blow your wife to a trip to Rochester, Minnesota. We'll have her go through the clinic there. If she needs an operation, we'll have it done by the best surgeon in the country. This is my treat."

"Say, listen," Jimmy said belligerently, "what is this—a bribe?"

Storm laughed. "How could I bribe you? Is she well enough to travel?"

"Sure, she's well enough to travel. I've picked up enough red-hot stories tonight to fill my paper for a week. It's beginning to worry me. Are you getting ready to say: 'Of course, Jimmy, you won't dream of mentioning anything you've seen or heard tonight?'"

STORM laughed. "I wouldn't say that, Jimmy. All I would say is, please don't mention anything you haven't seen or heard tonight."

"You think I'm cuckoo on the subject of Miss Brangwyn, huh?"

Storm nodded.

"Certainly I do."

"Well, what shall I write?"

"I'm going to leave it entirely up to you. All I want is a square break. In case my theory may be right and yours wrong, don't say anything that may spoil my case. Can you do that and still be ethical?"

"In either case," Jimmy reflected aloud, "I have to keep mum on the emerald owl, or one quarter of a million becomes counterfeit money."

"I'll leave it to your discretion."

"I want to give you a square break on this," Jimmy said earnestly; "but, after all, I am a newspaper reporter. I don't want to spill the beans and spoil your case, but I've got to give the public some highlights."

There was a short silence.

"I'll send you back to the city in one of my cars first thing in the morning," Storm said. "The rest of tonight we'll devote to discussion. What I need is a log fire, a long, pale highball—"

"Not too pale," Jimmy quickly interjected.

"—and the opportunity," Storm went on, "to begin at the very beginning—with the murder—and take up point by point what we have seen and heard tonight from all sources—and to convince you, by irrefutable logic, that your argument is absolutely—"

"Correct!" Jimmy finished firmly.

THE early editions of the Steel City newspapers on the following morning fairly smoked with exciting rumors, none of which it seemed possible to verify. It was rumored that Anthony Storm, for two months a recluse on his Malvern estate, had been retained by Corrine Brangwyn and would appear at her trial as counsel for the defense. It was rumored that Miss Brangwyn, after being arrested, had escaped her captors and flown from Graymoor to Malvern in her black biplane to enlist the sympathies and aid of this man who had once been reported engaged to her.

Anthony Storm could not be reached at his estate.

Maitland Hamp, the district attorney, had nothing to say beyond the bare statement that he had caused the arrest of Corrine Brangwyn because certain "strong evidence" indicated her guilt.

Pat Wren, chief of the Steel City Homicide Squad, referred all newspaper inquiries to Maitland Hamp.

Dan Hoyt, city chemist, referred all inquiries to Pat Wren.

Elery Gans, in seclusion at Graymoor, refused to talk.

Corrine Brangwyn, in her cell, would answer no questions.

The murder of Joshua Nally was, therefore, shrouded in darkest mystery. It was well on the way to becoming the "murder of the century."

Only one fact was a certainty: Joshua Nally was dead, presumably at the hand of Corrine Brangwyn. Rich, fruity details, for which the public was hungering, were totally lacking.

The city room of the Steel City Post was practically deserted when Jimmy Mullen, with bloodshot, sleepless

eyes, sauntered in shortly after the first edition had gone to press.

Sam Blake, his city editor, was trying to talk on three telephones at once when Jimmy reached the city desk. Finishing the conversation, the city editor thrust three receivers into their appropriate hooks and exclaimed with a spurious smile:

"Well, well, well! I'm delighted to see you this morning, Mr. Mullen. It was so good of you to drop in. Won't you have a chair and one of my dollar cigars?"

"No, thanks," Jimmy answered; "my throat is raw from dollar cigars. What's on for today?"

The city editor abandoned his heavy irony and cut loose.

"Look here!" he roared. "I send you out to get a story out of Anthony Storm, and you show up twenty-four hours later looking like something that a gashouse cat would reject after one sniff. Do you know that one of the most prominent men in this city was murdered yesterday afternoon?"

"I heard about it," Jimmy admitted.

"Oh, you did, did you? Maybe you heard that every man I can lay a hand on is out trying to dig up something. Or maybe it doesn't even interest you."

Jimmy's sleepless night had given him an owl's look.

"Sure, it interests me, Sam. It's a very interesting situation."

Sam Blake dropped his elbows to the desk and cushioned his thin, hard chin in his palms.

"Really?" he drawled sarcastically. "It really interests you?"

"Sure," Jimmy repeated, "it interests me."

"Then perhaps," said his city editor, "you might care to mingle with some other reporters who are trying to get something out of Maitland Hamp, Anthony Storm, Elery Gans, Corrine Brangwyn, Pat Wren and Dan Hoyt. Or perhaps you're too tired. Perhaps you'd rather go home and take a nice long nap before you go back to that speak-easy."

Jimmy took out a cigarette and lighted it with slow deliberation. He wanted to draw out this delicious moment to the last succulent taste.

"Why should I bother," he asked airily, "when I've already interviewed them all?"

His city editor sat back and locked his hands behind his head.

"So you've interviewed them all!" he said. "They came to that speak-easy one at a time and told you the story of their lives."

"Not exactly," Jimmy said.

"But I interviewed them all."

Let me see, now. Did I?" He began ticking them off on his fingers. "Anthony Storm, Corrine Brangwyn, Elery Gans, Maitland Hamp, Pat Wren, Dan Hoyt. That's all you mentioned, wasn't it?"

"That's all," the city editor drawled. "And on your way home from Wonderland, did you happen to stop off



"Your study, at Graymoor, has more than twenty pictures as well as eleven statuettes of Napoleon."

and interview Mr. Hoover, Henry Ford and Charley Lindbergh?"

"I don't recall seeing either of those gentlemen," Jimmy said. "I was too busy getting you all the dope on the Nally murder."

"I suppose you rode over with Storm when the Brangwyn girl called for him in her plane."

"That's correct, Sam."

"And I suppose you were in the kitchen at Graymoor when Dan Hoyt, the city chemist, was analyzing those mysterious, rumored cupcakes."

"Sure! I was right at his elbow!"

"And while you were there, you roamed around and had nice little chats with Maitland Hamp, Elery Gans and Pat Wren. Correct me if I'm wrong."

Jimmy smiled.

"But you're right, Sam!"

The city editor sprang up. His face was suddenly red and all of his bright, shiny politeness had disappeared.

"You drunken bum," he roared, "you're through! Get the hell out of here! I haven't any time to waste on speak-easy rats!"

"Sam," Jimmy said, "keep your shirt on. We've done enough kidding. Look out that window."

"I told you to get out of here!"

"This isn't a gag, Sam. I'm serious. Look out that window. Look down at the curbstone. See what's parked there and then tell me I'm a liar."

The city editor turned his head impatiently and glanced out the window and down. At the curbstone was parked a roadster which was unmistakably of the most expensive make. The top was down. The upholstery was indigo-blue. The hood alone seemed as long as an ordinary car. Unquestionably, that was the roadster the *Post* had described in some detail less than a month previous when it had been delivered to Anthony Storm's estate manager, at Malvern.

Sam Blake gasped: "That's Anthony Storm's roadster! What's it doing down there?"

"Oh, Andy's letting me use it to run around in," Jimmy said airily.

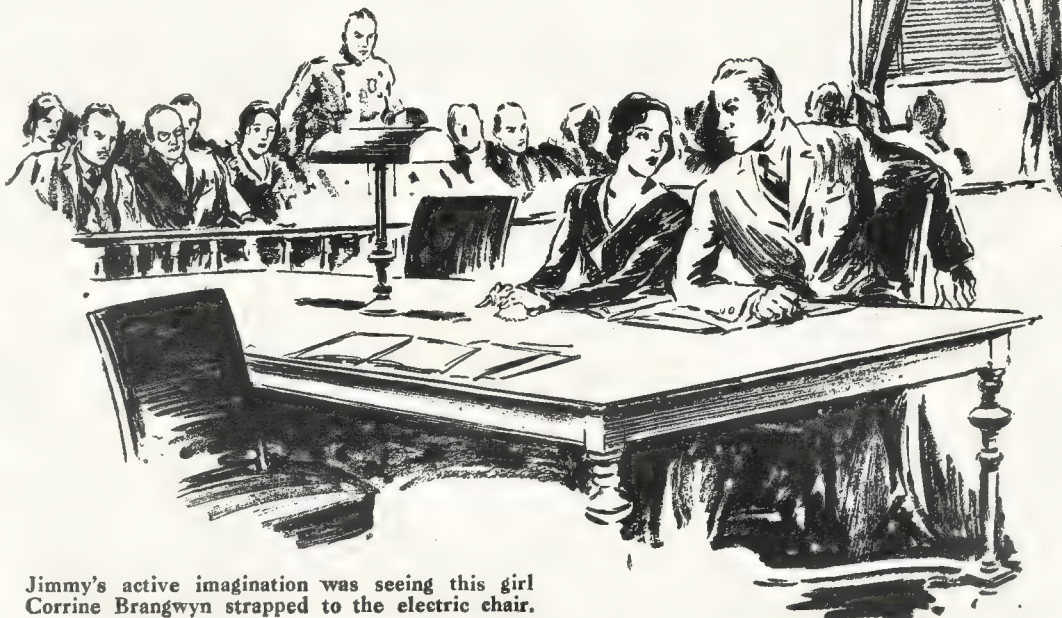
The city editor swung around. "Where did you get that car?" he snapped.

"Didn't I just tell you? Andy Storm lent it to me. I've just come from Malvern. Andy and I have spent the night in front of his fireplace, drinking prewar Scotch highballs and discussing the Nally murder. That's why I am slightly cock-eyed. But I'm not tight, Sam. Hadn't you better herd a few rewrite men over here? I am ready to spill a lot of stuff."

Sam Blake seized Jimmy by the shoulders and shook him. "Are you kidding me," he roared, "or aren't you?"

"I'm telling you," Jimmy said patiently, "I have been with Andy Storm every minute since five last night. I broke through his hedge. He came clean on what he's going to do with that ten million. While we were talking, Corrine Brangwyn flew in, dropped a landing-flare and

sat her ship down right on the lawn. When she flew Andy back to Graymoor, I went along. I've been over every square inch of the scene of the



Jimmy's active imagination was seeing this girl Corrine Brangwyn strapped to the electric chair.

murder with Storm. I interviewed Elery Gans, Maitland Hamp, Pat Wren and Dan Hoyt. At least, I had both ears flapping while they talked.

"No!" Sam Blake cried, almost sobbing.

"Yes!"

"But they refused to let reporters in at Graymoor! Hamp, Wren, Gans and the Brangwyn girl refuse to talk! Storm won't see a soul!"

"I know it. I've got a corner on the whole works, from soup to nuts. I am Andy Storm's best pal. He said so less than an hour ago."

"I—I don't believe it! How did you get in there?"

"With a pair of tin-snips—through his hedge. Look at this suit! Look at these scratches!"

"How did you get into Graymoor?"

"As Andy's bodyguard. I was nothing but a shadow."

"You're drunk—or joking. No reporter ever had such luck! Don't try to make me believe you flew over in that plane from Malvern with Miss Brangwyn at the controls!"

"But I did. I met everybody, went everywhere and saw everything!"

Sam Blake exploded. "Well, why in the blue-whiskered blazes didn't you say so?"

"Haven't I been trying for fifteen minutes to say so?" Jimmy meekly asked.

The city editor stared at him wildly, still unwilling to believe that Jimmy Mullen—genial, easy-going Jimmy Mullen—had realized, beyond fondest hopes, the dreams of all reporters. He was pale, perspiring and palpitating. He sat down heavily. He sprang up again.

"Copy!" he yelled. And when a copy-boy came loping up: "Tell the composing-room foreman to leave that front page on the stone. Tell him to open it up for a seven-column streamer. —Brown!" he roared. "Anderson! Machamer! Simpson!"

"Tell your story," Sam Blake barked at Jimmy, "and tell it fast. We'll catch the next edition with a summary of everything while you're knocking out your story in detail. Listen, you guys: Jimmy has beat the town on the Nally case. He interviewed Storm. You get that, Brown."

He flew from Malvern to Graymoor with Storm and Miss Brangwyn. You get that, Anderson. He interviewed Hamp, Gans, Wren and Hoyt. You get that, Machamer. Jimmy, while I'm knocking out a head and drops, you knock out a lead. Now—shoot!"

Jimmy briskly related his amazing adventure, omitting all reference to the emerald owl. Then he seated himself at his typewriter. He inserted a sheet of copy paper. He ran his fingers through his wild brown hair. He lighted a cigarette and tapped off, with one finger, a "by line."

He found himself, after an all-night session of drinking and heated argument, in which he and the lawyer had several times all but come to blows, with three firm convictions:

First: That Corrine Brangwyn was guilty of the murder of Joshua Nally.

Second: That Anthony Storm had been changed by his visit to the electric chair to a bloodless machine whose sole motivating force was revenge.

Third: That Storm wanted to believe that Elery Gans was the murderer and the perpetrator of a diabolical plot, and that Storm would therefore spend every cent of his ten millions, if necessary, in ruthlessly smashing the man.

But Jimmy made no rash assertions in his story. He shrouded the murder of Joshua Nally in darkest mystery. He wanted to play fair.

CHAPTER XIII

"CELESTE BEAUCLAIRE will take the stand!" Jimmy Mullen, with his right temple resting on his right palm with his fingers tangled in his unruly brown hair, watched Corrine Brangwyn's French maid—the State's ninth witness to date—take the witness chair; watched her adjust her black skirt about her slim, pretty, French legs, and smile demurely. She was, Jimmy knew, quite aware that tabloid photographers and news-reel men would be awaiting her, when she left the courthouse, like a pack of baying hounds.

Celeste Beauclaire would tell the eager American public, *via* front pages and news weeklies, what she knew about a certain slim, blue bottle with a cut-glass stopper which had been found by detectives on a pantry shelf of the Nally kitchen. And she would step off the witness-stand into a pleasant little job on the vaudeville stage at no less than five hundred dollars a week.

It was amazing, Jimmy reflected, how the American public was eating up this trial. Yet, again, it wasn't. No end of factors made it a triumph of sensationalism. Anthony Storm's presence, as counsel for the defense, would have thrown any murder trial onto the front pages. So would Corrine Brangwyn's beauty. The combination of the two, plus the fact that they were in love, plus the sensational character of the murder itself, plus a dozen other fruity circumstances, would have pushed a world war off the front pages.

"DoyousweartotellthetruththewholetruthandnothingbutthetruthsohelpyouGod?"

"Oui—yes, m'sieur."

"Do you speak English, Miss?"

"Parfaictly."

A soft murmur of amusement swept the courtroom. Judge Holden glared. He was the glaring kind of judge—a handsome nut-brown man of sixty with fine white hair and the look of a golfer about him. He wasn't, incidentally, giving the counsel for the defense many breaks. It was, as Jimmy had anticipated, a walk-away for the State.

The courtroom, of course, was packed. Admission was by ticket only. And it seemed to Jimmy that half the spectators were special writers, eminent psychologists and lady novelists, hired at fabulous salaries by feature syndicates to write their personal impressions and opinions for America's sensation-hungry millions.

"Miss Beauclaire, do you recognize this bottle?"

Jimmy glanced idly at the notorious bottle which had once held a sixty-dollar-an-ounce Parisian perfume, blended particularly for Miss Brangwyn.

"With Mr. Storm's permission, I wish to introduce this bottle as material evidence K for the State. Now, Miss Beauclaire, will you kindly tell the jury when and where you last saw this bottle?"

Shred upon shred—a towering mountain of evidence. Or—link by link, an unbreakable chain which was surely, with certainty, dragging Corrine Brangwyn toward the electric chair.

One fact was certain: Jimmy Mullen was not going to be in the death-chamber on the night of her execution. He'd quit first.

Jimmy, shifting his glance from the cheaply pretty little French girl on the stand, to the counsel's table, searched the defendant's face with shrewd, measuring young eyes. Dressed simply and entirely in black, she was beautiful. Her face was totally without color. Her eyes were enormous dark shadows.

She and Anthony Storm sat alone at the large table, elbow to elbow, heads up, eyes on the witness, a dramatically striking couple—Storm with his snow-white hair and his recently acquired tan; under the strain of the trial, he looked fifty.

They were as alone as though they were castaways on a desert island.

They were fighting a gallant fight. It was just too bad that women did their thinking afterward.

No one granted her a chance. Maitland Hamp had fought hard for a jury of poor men, young married men. They were a shabby lot. A lot of bolsheviks, Jimmy reflected, sitting in judgment on the richest woman who was ever put on trial for murder.

A walk-away for the State. Why not? Any doubts Jimmy may have had of Corrine Brangwyn's guilt were swept away when the terms of Joshua Nally's will were made public a few days after his violent death.

Corrine Brangwyn was named as his sole heir in a will executed the day before the old steel-master's murder. She was, newspapers estimated, heiress to a fortune of between sixty and seventy millions in stocks and bonds—mostly in bonds.

There were rumors that the old steel-master had, in late years, dissipated most of his fortune on unwise speculations; but these were not verified.

JIMMY looked about the packed courtroom again—was annoyed by the eager-eyed hunting look he saw everywhere. Breathlessly expectant men and women were devouring each morsel of evidence as the State plucked it from the lips of nicely coached witnesses.

"What became of this bottle?"

"I do not know, m'sieur. Eet vaneeshed."

"Do you remember that date?"

"Yes, m'sieur. Octobair twenty-third."

Joshua Nally had been murdered on the twenty-fifth.

"That will be all."

Storm waved his hand in a gesture of dismissal.

"Patrick Wren will take the stand."

Jimmy sat back and gnawed the rubber eraser on his pencil as the detective walked to the witness chair, looking more military than ever; his white mustache was neatly

trimmed, his eyes cold and businesslike, his air one of an official in complete possession of a situation.

Pat Wren would, Jimmy was aware, drive a few more nails in Corrine Brangwyn's coffin. It was really a farce, yet it had to be gone through with. How many hundreds of thousands had Storm already spent on investigations? Jimmy did not know, but the amount must be close to a million. All this money—to prove what?

"What is your occupation, Mr. Wren?" Maitland Hamp was standing now. He was getting into very important testimony.

"I am in charge of the Homicide Bureau of the Steel City police force."

"Where were you at about four-thirty o'clock on the afternoon of October twenty-fifth?"

"In my office at Headquarters."

"At about this hour, did you receive a long-distance telephone call?"

"Yes sir."

"Please tell the jury about it."

"The call came at about four-thirty," the witness stated.

"It was from Graymoor, the country estate of the late Joshua Nally. His secretary, Elery Gans, was calling."

"Tell the jury about that conversation, Mr. Wren."

In his crisp, hard voice, the chief of the homicide squad answered:

"Mr. Gans seemed very excited and upset. He said that Mr. Nally had just dropped dead after finishing his afternoon tea. He asked me to come right out."

"What did you do?"

"I took a headquarters car to the municipal airport and was flown, with four of my men, to the landing-field at Graymoor in one of the city police planes."

"Were you met by any one?"

"Yes sir. The defendant—Miss Brangwyn—came rushing out across the field to the plane as it landed. She was in a state of hysterics. She said her uncle had been murdered by drops of poison put in his tea by Mr. Gans. I took her into the house and questioned her at length. And I also questioned Mr. Gans. He refuted her story and insisted that I immediately send for the city chemist to analyze some cup-cakes the defendant had baked for her uncle's tea. He said—"

"Who said?" Storm interrupted.

"Mr. Gans. Mr. Gans said that he was certain Mr. Nally had died as a result of eating poisoned cakes."

"Objected to as hearsay evidence," Storm said.

JUDGE HOLDEN sustained the objection. Maitland Hamp instructed the witness to proceed with his story.

"I immediately telephoned for the city chemist, Daniel Hoyt, and told him to go to the municipal airport and bring some assistants and chemical paraphernalia. I sent the plane back for him."

The witness paused.

Maitland Hamp said: "Kindly describe to the jury the defendant's actions during your investigations at Graymoor."

"She was very excited and hysterical. I kept her under guard in her room while Daniel Hoyt was on the way. That is, I asked her to stay in her room, and I put a guard outside her door. About half-past five, I sent up word that I wanted to see her. My men had found that blue perfume-bottle full of cyanide on a pantry shelf, and had determined—the chemists, I mean—that the cakes she had baked had cyanide in them. But when we opened her door, her room was empty. A bathroom window was open, and from marks we found, we knew she had escaped."

"What did you do?"

"I immediately telephoned headquarters in Steel City

and gave instructions for a search to be made. We found she had flown off in her plane."

"Did she return?"

"Yes sir, about an hour later. She came back with Mr. Storm and a young fellow who I learned later is a reporter. He is sitting over there now at the press table."

"Will you tell the jury, Mr. Wren, just what evidence you found at Graymoor which convinced you that Miss Brangwyn was lying when she blamed Mr. Gans for the murder and that she actually had committed it herself?"

"I went about securing what evidence there was in the usual way," Pat Wren answered. "I turned loose two fingerprint experts while I and several of my men searched the premises. One of the first things we found was the blue bottle. My fingerprint men found plenty of Miss Brangwyn's fingerprints on it."

Jimmy cushioned his left temple on the heel of his left palm and gazed dreamily at Elery Gans. The secretary to the late Joshua Nally was seated in the first row of spectators, gazing mildly at the witness through the thick lenses of his spectacles.

The reporter was impatient. All that Pat Wren had to say he knew. So did the jury. So did the spectators. He was tired of hearing about cakes and blue bottles. He wanted Elery Gans to take the stand.

A fingerprint expert took the stand. He was followed by another fingerprint expert. Then Daniel Hoyt, the city chemist, was called.

HOYT testified that he had flown to Graymoor from the municipal airport with two assistants and a quantity of chemical apparatus. He had set up this apparatus in the kitchen and had been instructed to analyze some iced cup-cakes and the contents of Joshua Nally's stomach.

"Will you tell the jury how long a time elapsed from Mr. Nally's death to the pumping of his stomach?"

"He died at about four-fifteen," the chemist answered. "His stomach was pumped at about six."

"Did you find any evidence that he had eaten cup-cakes?"

"The contents of his stomach were thoroughly digested. It was impossible to say whether he had eaten cakes. He might have eaten bread or cake at lunch which would have given the same chemical reactions."

"Can you tell me, Mr. Hoyt, whether or not a man's stomach continues to digest food after his death?"

"Yes sir. Digestion continues, although at a somewhat abated pace, because of the fact that the body is gradually cooling. Almost all chemical reactions are stimulated by heat."

Maitland Hamp rubbed his hands together. "Then you cannot state whether or not Joshua Nally ate cup-cakes?"

"No sir. Chemistry doesn't go quite that far."

"Did you find cyanide in the contents of his stomach?"

"Yes sir. We found approximately twelve grains of cyanide."

"Would you say that twelve grains was the total quantity he had consumed?"

"No sir. A certain amount of it was taken into the blood-vessels with which the stomach is lined, and from them distributed about the blood-stream."

"You have no idea how much?"

"No sir. It doesn't take much of the stuff to kill a man."

"Did you analyze the cakes?"

"Yes sir; I analyzed two batches of them."

"Will you explain to the jury why you analyzed two batches of cakes?"

"Yes sir. One batch was given to me by Mr. Wren when I had set up my apparatus in the kitchen. There were six in that batch. The other batch was given to me by Mr. Storm. There were five in that batch."

"Presumably, Miss Brangwyn had baked a dozen."

"Yes sir; we found the cup-cake tin."

The district attorney picked up from his table a cup-cake tin of shiny white metal.

"I wish to introduce this cup-cake baking tin as Exhibit L for the State, Your Honor. May I point out that it contains twelve depressions—that is four rows of three depressions?"

The exhibit was admitted and passed to the jury.

MAITLAND HAMP faced the witness. "In other words, one cup-cake was missing?"

"Yes sir."

"And we presume that that is the cake which Joshua Nally ate and which caused his death."

"Objected to," Storm interrupted, "as self-admittedly presumptive."

"Sustained."

"Mr. Hoyt," the district attorney proceeded, "will you kindly tell the jury, in everyday language, just how you conducted your analyses?"

The city chemist clasped his hands and looked at the jury.

"To begin with," he said, "a solution of cyanide will not effervesce in hydrochloric acid. We proceed to determine the presence of any cyanide by heating to redness in a crucible one part of the suspected material and three parts of ammonium carbonate, dissolving the residue in water acidulated with nitric—"

"I'm afraid," Maitland Hamp interrupted, "that doesn't mean much to us laymen, Mr. Hoyt. We assume that you know how to go about determining the presence of cyanide. Please omit chemical formulas and tell us what the tests proved."

"I ran two analyses," the chemist complied; "one qualitative—that is, to determine just what poison, if any, was used; and the other to determine the quantity of the poison used, once we learned what poison it was."

"That's better," observed Hamp. "How much cyanide was in each cake?"

"A little over twelve grains."

"In other words, about the same quantity that you found in the contents of Mr. Nally's stomach?"

"Yes sir."

"How much cyanide would kill a healthy man?"

"It would depend. But a fraction of twelve grains would kill any man."

"I see." The district attorney consulted a notebook. Then:

"Were you in the kitchen, later in the evening—that same evening—when Mr. Storm and the reporter came into the kitchen with a bagful of articles which they said they had found in an old potato cellar?"

"Yes sir."

"Kindly tell the jury about those articles and your findings in connection with them."

Jimmy did not listen to the reply. He was looking at Corrine Brangwyn and wondering if she was sorry she had baked those cakes; wondering what Andy Storm would do when twelve good men and true marched into the courtroom and declared that, in their opinion, the defendant was guilty of the crime as charged. Would they recommend mercy? No—not those bolshevists! In these days of hard times, of world-wide unemployment, millionaires were hated more than ever before by the toiling classes.

Jimmy squirmed. His active imagination was seeing this girl Corrine Brangwyn strapped into the electric chair. He was seeing the black mask go over her face. It made Jimmy feel sick.

He sat up, clear-minded, as Storm took the city chemist for cross-examination.

"I merely wish you to state again what you stated a moment ago," Storm said. "You say that the contents of the deceased's stomach were not pumped out until about two hours after his death?"

"Yes sir."

"And you found that those contents consisted entirely of liquid?"

"Yes sir."

"There were no undigested particles?"

"No sir."

"That will be all."

Maitland Hamp said: "My next witness is Elery Gans."

A murmur of excitement swept over the courtroom. But it ceased immediately when Judge Holden said:

"Gentlemen of the jury, we are about to take a recess until two this afternoon. The Court admonishes you not to speak about this case among yourselves or permit anyone to speak to you about it. You will keep your minds open until the case is finally submitted to you. The defendant will retire."

Jimmy waited until bailiffs had conducted Corrine Brangwyn out of the courtroom and to her cell. Then he went over to Storm.

"How's for stepping out for a snack?" he asked.

Storm looked up with a tired grin. "Too busy today, Jimmy."

"How do things look?"

The lawyer shrugged.

"Have you heard anything lately from Professor Ingal?"

"Yes. He phoned me this morning from Rome while I was taking a shower. The trail is commencing to warm up. He told me that he had found the man who owned the owl forty years ago. The man is now a gondolier in Venice. He's over seventy, but he remembered the owl. He sold it to a pawnbroker in Palermo. The Palermo pawnbroker has been dead twenty-five years, but he kept a careful record of every article he bought and sold, with names and dates. In eighteen ninety-eight, he sold the owl to a woman—a Spanish woman—who, according to Professor Ingal, lost it in nineteen hundred and eleven in Barcelona, as she was leaving the little steamer that runs between Majorca and Barcelona. It must have been picked up by an Italian sailor, for it turned up again in an antique shop in Florence, where it remained until a few years ago."

Jimmy grunted. "Was it worth two hundred thousand to find that out?"

"Yes! I said the trail is getting warm. It's a matter of hours now. Professor Ingal was on his way to Florence when he phoned. I told him to charter a plane. That's why I'm staying here. I've instructed the long-distance chief operator to have any European calls switched to me here."

Jimmy said excitedly: "You may have the dope by this afternoon!"

"If the Italian telephone service doesn't collapse and there isn't a lightning storm over the Atlantic."

"Have you anything to say for publication?"

"Nothing that I haven't said before."

"Yeah, I know. 'Mr. Storm, when interviewed by a reporter from the Evening Post, stated confidentially that his faith in his client's innocence was unshaken.'"

STORM laughed. "It hasn't been shaken yet, Jimmy." "If I had your optimism," Jimmy said, "by this time, I'd own a string of newspapers. Just the same, I'll tell you confidentially the name that is going to come over the long-distance circuit when this Italian situation gives up its secret."

He paused. A tabloid reporter was standing beside him,

frankly listening to what Jimmy was saying. Jimmy recognized him as the man who had stood beside him in the death-chamber that memorable night—the reporter who had jeered at Anthony Storm's declaration of innocence.

"What," asked the tabloid man, "about the Italian situation?"

Jimmy said airily, "I'll see you later, Andy," and linked his arm through the reporter's, leading him away.

"What?" Jimmy said.

"What's this you were saying about the Italian situation?"

"Haven't you heard about it?" Jimmy answered in a low, tense voice.

"No!" the reporter whispered. "What about it?"

"It seems," Jimmy said, "that Italy is hip-deep in wild-goose feathers. . . ."

On Jimmy's return from his lunch he stopped at the counsel's table and asked Storm if Professor Ingal's long-distance phone call had come through.

"Not yet."

"Hamp will be through this afternoon, Andy. Gans is his last witness. Can you get a postponement?"

"I doubt it."

Jimmy took his seat at the press table as Judge Holden entered. He was chewing his pencil eraser when bailiffs brought the prisoner in, but he looked quickly away. Jimmy wished she hadn't worn black. He visualized her standing with head uplifted as it was now when the clerk of the court bent his fishy eyes on her and said:

"Have you anything to say why judgment of this Court should not be passed upon you?"

Would she say, "I am innocent?"

What would her millions avail her then? And Jimmy fell to wondering again how much Storm had already expended on his elaborate investigations. He knew that the lawyer had enlisted the services of the two greatest detectives in private practice, in the country; that these men, with hundreds of operatives working under them, had probed into the least chink of Elery Gans' past. He knew that the services of a firm of public accountants had been enlisted, and it had come to Jimmy's ears that the banks, the brokerage houses where Gans had done business had been ransacked.

He had heard of this and he had charged Storm with going a little too far. It was during one of their hot arguments. Storm had said: "You know damned well, Jimmy, there is nothing I won't leave undone."

"Yes," Jimmy had agreed, "and I think it's a rotten shame to spend so much when you won't find a nickel's worth of truth."

"I'm willing to spend ten million to find that nickel's worth of truth."

"But it doesn't exist."

"I'll make it exist!"

"The jails are full of poor devils who aren't getting a break because they're strapped. Why not spend a million on one of them?"

"I will later," Storm asserted.



The fish-eyed clerk now droned: "Hear ye! Hear ye! Hear ye!"

And he droned on: "Elery Gans will take the stand."

For the first time since the trial had started, days ago, Jimmy came fully awake. Elery Gans was the witness he wanted to hear. Over Elery Gans the big battle would be fought. The others were only preliminary bouts.

Smoothing his mouse-colored hair with the flat of his left hand, the secretary to the late steel master walked firmly to the witness chair and seated himself.

He peered through his thick lenses at Maitland Hamp. He folded his hands in his lap, relaxing. In the hush, Jimmy could hear the voices of newsboys on the streets, reading, in their cries, the headlines which had been on the streets at lunch-time:

GANS TAKES THE STAND!

Maitland Hamp had thrust his hard, square fists into the side pockets of his coat. With feet apart, head back, shoulders squared—his favorite courtroom stance—he faced the witness.

"Mr. Gans," he said, "you have sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. You took that solemn oath on the Holy Bible. I know that you are a sensitive man, a man who shrinks from thoughts of crime, of passion, of violence. I know that, in the past few years, you have been subjected to ordeals which have tried you sorely. I know that you are reluctant to take the witness-stand today and answer my questions. Yet I must ask you to answer them fully, frankly, freely, without regard to the feelings of—shall we say?—one who has erred and realized too late, alas, her error! *Justice—must—be—served!*"

Over his right shoulder Jimmy saw the staff artist of a prominent New York newspaper busily embroidering with scrolls and flourishes a word that he had lettered with elaborate pains on his drawing pad. Leaning forward, Jimmy read the word. It was *bologna*. Jimmy suppressed a cynical grin and commented to himself: "Yeah—you and me both, brother." He knew Maitland Hamp was in the right, but he disliked the district attorney.



against her brother. She thought he shouldn't have testified."

"And she said," the district attorney took him up: "Some day I am going to kill him for what he did to my brother."

"Yes sir; she was constantly making remarks of that nature—ever since her brother went to prison."

"Can you recall others?"

The witness opened his hands despairingly.

"She was making such remarks all the time, Mr. Hamp. A day didn't go by—an hour didn't go by—but what she made some reference to the fact that she was going to get even with Mr. Nally."

"Did she ever say, on other occasions, she intended to kill him?"

"Frequently. Yes—frequently."

"Did you attempt to reason with her?"

"Yes sir. I told her to remember that her uncle was an old man, and not to hold it against him."

"Very well. On the afternoon of October 25th, at about three, you went into the kitchen and held a similar conversation with her—she threatening to kill her uncle, you persuading her to use reason."

"Yes sir."

"Were you in the kitchen more than once?"

"Oh, yes. Several times. I was worried. She had—well, she had a look in her face."

"Describe it!"

"I don't know that I can. It was a cold, hard, frightening look. I grew more and more worried. Somehow, I had the feeling that—that something awful was going to happen."

"Well, it happened," the district attorney said with grim humor. "You had the feeling that something awful was going to happen. All right. Let's leave the kitchen for a moment and go up into Joshua Nally's study. Isn't that where he had tea?"

"Yes sir—always in his study."

"Was it not Miss Brangwyn's invariable custom to prepare her uncle's tea and to bring it to him in his study?"

"Yes."

"Please tell the jury what happened in that study on the afternoon, or early evening, of October 25th."

"Well," the witness began in a strained voice, "I was in Mr. Nally's study at a little after four when Miss Brangwyn came in with a tray of tea-things."

"I can't hear," the stenographer said.

"You'll have to speak more loudly, Mr. Gans," the judge said.

Mr. Gans cleared his throat, said, "Yes, Your Honor," and proceeded: "Miss Brangwyn placed the tea-tray on a tea-cart and poured out the tea for her uncle, myself and herself. Then, with something of a flourish; she pulled a napkin off a dish and said: 'Here, uncle, are some delicious little cakes I baked for you this afternoon—especially for you.'"

Jimmy flashed a look at the defendant. She had settled back in her chair and placed her hand to her forehead. He could see her right foot under the table—a slim, small, aristocratic foot. It was tapping angrily. Jimmy made a note of that:

"B's foot tapping angrily."

Maitland Hamp barked: "Did he eat a cup-cake?"

"Not at first. He said he wasn't feeling well, wasn't feeling hungry, only wanted his tea. She persisted. She still had that awful look on her face. I was afraid."

"Wait a minute!" the district attorney snapped. "Did you eat a cup-cake?"

"Mr. Gans, you will kindly tell the jury what took place in the home of Joshua Nally on the afternoon of October 25th."

Elery Gans peered at the jury. Obviously he was reluctant to begin.

"So much happened," he said finally, in his mild voice.

Maitland Hamp withdrew his fists from his pockets and folded his arms. His lower jaw protruded like a bulldog's.

"At about three o'clock on the afternoon in question, did you not go into the Nally kitchen?"

"Yes"—meekly.

"Did you find the defendant in the kitchen mixing the batter for some cup-cakes she was making for her uncle's afternoon tea?"

"I did—yes sir."

"Did you have any conversation with her?"

"Yes sir. I asked her, casually, what she was doing."

The district attorney: "What did she say?"—sharply.

"She said: 'I am making some cup-cakes for that vile old man.'"

Jimmy flashed a look at Corrine Brangwyn. She was staring at the witness with blazing eyes and hotly flushed cheeks.

"Did the defendant make any other remarks of that nature? Try to recall the conversation, Mr. Gans. I know it is painful, but this is evidence which we must have on record."

The witness moistened his lips. "She said: 'I am making some cup-cakes for that vile old man. Some day I am going to kill him for what he did to my poor brother.'"

"Kindly explain that remark, if you can, Mr. Gans."

"She was," Mr. Gans answered, "referring to the very unfortunate plight of her brother Seth, who, only ten days previous, had gone to prison for five years after his conviction on a charge of grand larceny."

"On what was this conviction based?"

"Seth was convicted of having stolen eighty thousand dollars' worth of Mr. Nally's Liberty bonds."

"Did Mr. Nally testify against Seth Brangwyn?"

"Yes sir; that was what she meant. Mr. Nally testified

"No sir! I wouldn't be alive today if I had!"

"Why didn't you eat one?"

"I don't know. I was beginning to be suspicious. It's hard to explain. I kept thinking of the look on her face while she was making them. And I remembered all her threats to kill her uncle. I don't say that I suspected then that the cup-cakes were poisoned, but nevertheless something made me not eat them."

"When did you grow suspicious?"

"I grew suspicious when she grew more urgent. She kept insisting that he eat one of the cakes which she had baked especially for him. 'With my own hands,' she kept saying."

"Then why didn't you warn Mr. Nally?"

"I was tempted to. Then it struck me that I was imagining things. After all, it would have been ridiculous to have jumped up and said, 'Don't eat them! They're poisoned!' and then to have found that they weren't poisoned. Frankly, I didn't know what to do. A man doesn't go around crying that this and that is poisoned. He'd be a lunatic if he did."

"Not even," Maitland Hamp asked, "when his suspicions are aroused?"

"Not even then. Why should I have thought they were poisoned? It's a question that's kept me awake night after night. I saw her put no poison into them. I had no tangible proof. But there was this sinister, threatening thing in the air."

"Needless to say, she made no pretence of eating one?"

"Obviously, not."

"Proceed."

"Her uncle finally drank his tea. Miss Brangwyn poured him a second cup. Once again, she urged him to try a cup-cake. She pushed the plate toward him. This time, Mr. Nally surrendered. He picked up a cup-cake and ate it in two bites."

"Did he make any comment?"

"Yes. He said: 'It tastes queer. It has a bitter taste!' Then he stood up with a strange expression on his face. He uttered a queer, strangled cry. He pitched forward on his face—dead!"

CHAPTER XIV

ELERY GANS stopped. He took out a white handkerchief and mopped his wet forehead with it. He looked, somewhat dazedly, about the courtroom. It was so quiet that the ticking of the clock, above the bench, could be heard loudly. There was a rustling of soft gasps.

"Then—what?" Maitland Hamp snapped.

"Miss Brangwyn jumped up and grabbed the plate of cakes. I said: 'You've poisoned him! You've killed him!' I snatched the plate from her hand as she started to pick it up and ran into my study. I wanted to hide them, to have them analyzed—give them to the police. She followed me into my study. She cursed at me. She tried to snatch the plate. She kicked me and hit me with her fists. In the confusion, she seized one of the cup-cakes and ran from the room. I immediately telephoned police headquarters."

Jimmy was gazing dreamily at the ceiling, absorbed in the industry of a large black spider that was engaged in spinning a web in a corner. He lowered his eyes and looked under the counsel's table. Miss Brangwyn's slim, aristocratic little foot was no longer angrily tapping. She was clutching Anthony Storm's arm in her two hands, whispering rapidly to him. He firmly shook his head.

Questions and answers were flying. Maitland Hamp was taking his star witness back and forth over his testimony, tightening it here, plugging up loopholes there. He

was far busier than that spider, and he was weaving a web, not of gossamer, but of stout steel and iron and concrete. To Jimmy's quick imagination, it was taking the form of the death-house at the State penitentiary.

He was not startled when Maitland Hamp suddenly said:

"That is all. The State rests."

ANTHONY STORM stood up and approached the bench. Elery Gans, still in the witness chair, looked inquiringly at Maitland Hamp.

"Stay where you are, please," Storm said. To Judge Holden, he said: "Your Honor, I am expecting a long-distance telephone call of the utmost urgency. It may come while I am in the midst of taking testimony. If it should, will you excuse me for no more than five minutes?"

It was a somewhat unusual request. But Judge Holden smiled indulgently and nodded. Jimmy guessed that the judge was, in common with everyone else, sorry for Storm—regretted seeing a good fighter lose an unequal fight.

Storm returned slowly to the counsel table and picked up what appeared to be a roll of paper. With the roll in his hand he walked slowly to the witness and said:

"Mr. Gans, isn't it true that you are an admirer of this man?"

With the words spoken, he shook out the roll and held up for the witness to see—a lithographic likeness, in color, of Napoleon Bonaparte.

The twelve men in the jury box craned their necks for a glimpse. Elery Gans was staring at the portrait of France's most romantic ruler and greatest general.

Maitland Hamp was on his feet, striding to Storm's side. He looked at the Napoleon. His eyes darkened. He said impatiently:

"Of what possible significance is this?"

"I wish to establish a certain important fact."

Judge Holden bent forward and said crisply: "Gentlemen! Address your remarks to the bench."

Maitland Hamp said: "Your Honor, I want to know the purpose of this."

The Judge said, dryly: "Perhaps, if we permit Mr. Storm to proceed, we shall be duly enlightened. Proceed, Mr. Storm."

Storm faced the witness again. "Mr. Gans, will you answer my question?"

"Am I an admirer of Napoleon? Why, yes."

"Isn't it true that your study, at Graymoor, has more than twenty pictures and more than eleven statues and statuettes of Napoleon Bonaparte?"

"I never counted them, Mr. Storm. Perhaps you're right."

"Then do you admit that you are a great admirer of Napoleon?"

"I admire him—yes."

"Isn't it true that you have stated on numerous occasions to numerous people that you think Napoleon Bonaparte is the greatest man who ever lived?"

"I may have made such statements."

"Isn't it true that you have also stated, very frequently, that if Napoleon were alive today he would be an emperor and a general, not politically, but in the world of finance?"

Mr. Gans looked at him for a long time before he answered. "I may have made such statements—yes."

"And isn't it true that you have repeatedly said that you would rather be that man—that modern Napoleon of finance—than any man who had ever lived?"

"I don't remember."

"You don't remember saying that to Dr. Charles Lorber, Mr. Henry Sullivan, the banker, Mr. Charles Rudkin, the broker, Mr. Peter Stevenson, the building contractor—on separate occasions?"

Gans said quickly: "Perhaps I said it. But I can't see—"

"I object!" Maitland Hamp barked. "This line of questioning is utterly irrelevant, Your Honor, to the issue at stake."

"Your Honor," Storm put in quickly, "I am establishing a certain point. Until it is established, may I request that you withhold a ruling on the relevancy of my line of questioning?"

"I am interested in knowing what you are getting at, Mr. Storm," Judge Holden answered. "You may proceed on that basis."

Storm smiled pleasantly. "What I am getting at, trying to establish," he said, "is that the witness has what is known, somewhat humorously, as a Napoleon complex."

The witness smiled bleakly. "Perhaps I have. I don't know. I admit that I am a great admirer of Napoleon."

"Thank you, Mr. Gans, for saving us time. Being such an admirer of this modernized Napoleon—a Napoleon who rules the world of finance—have you not stated on various occasions that your one ambition is to become, yourself, a Napoleon of finance?"

Gans started to protest. Storm stopped him. "Take your time. Remember, Mr. Gans, I have come into this courtroom prepared to substantiate every statement I make."

"Your Honor," the district attorney interrupted angrily, "no matter what my esteemed colleague may be driving at, I object to having words thrust into this witness' mouth—and I strenuously object to bulldozing."

JUDGE HOLDEN warned Storm to word his questions more prudently.

"Proceed."

"Witness will kindly answer my question."

"That I have seen myself as a modern Napoleon of finance?"

"No! That you have stated that your greatest wish was to become a modern Napoleon of finance!"

"Perhaps I have. Since you have gone to such pains to substantiate your statements, I must have."

"I want that last sentence struck from the record, if Your Honor pleases," Storm said angrily.

The Judge instructed the stenographer to strike it out.

"Witness," he said, "will answer questions affirmatively or negatively, as he deems fit, but without unnecessary comment. Proceed, Mr. Storm."

"I want to know," Storm said, "how much money you had in the world when you went to work as Joshua Nally's secretary, eighteen years ago."

Maitland Hamp indignantly objected. "Your Honor, this witness is not on trial," he added.

Storm said: "If Your Honor pleases, I am attempting to prove a conspiracy, a plot, which vitally affects the standing of my client!"

Maitland Hamp again objected; was overruled. His exception was noted. Jimmy wondered what Storm had up his sleeve. This was all new to him.

Mr. Gans answered the question: "I don't remember how much I had in the world eighteen years ago."

"Isn't it true that you were dead broke, that your account at the Merchants & Traders bank was, on that date, overdrawn three dollars and fifteen cents?"

Gans looked uneasy. "You must have looked it up."

"I did look it up."

"Then it must be true. I must have been broke."

"Have you ever worked for anyone else, in these past eighteen years, but Joshua Nally?"

"No."

"And how much are you worth today?"

"Objection!" cried Maitland Hamp.

"Overruled! Proceed, Mr. Storm!"

"Will witness answer my question?"

"I don't know how much I am worth today."

"I want an estimate then."

"I can't give an estimate."

"How much were you worth last year when you filed your income-tax report in March?"

"I don't remember."

"I'll refresh your memory. You were worth eleven million."

"Perhaps I was."

"How did you earn that money?"

"By following Mr. Nally's investment suggestions."

"Didn't you have almost complete charge of his financial affairs as long ago as last year?"

"No."

Maitland Hamp was standing behind Storm with his fists clenched. Jimmy, watching his hard, pale face, recalled what the district attorney had said at Graymoor that eventful night: "You will be making a great mistake, Mr. Storm, if you enter a criminal court in a professional capacity. I am obliged to tell you that that old charge against you can at any time be reopened."

If Storm succeeded in using some of his million-dollar investigation material to crowd Elery Gans into a tight corner, would Maitland Hamp have Storm arrested on that old charge? That was what Jimmy wanted to know.

Storm said harshly: "Immediately after the death of his son, Burke Nally, did he not give you almost entire control of his investments?"

"I said no."

Storm came nearer him. "On August tenth, 1929, Burke Nally died—was murdered. Do you recall that, by any chance?"

"Naturally, I recall it!"

"One week later, on August seventeenth, did you not transfer from Mr. Nally's name to yours three million dollars' worth of American Telephone and Telegraph stock?"

"He transferred it to my name!"

"Then you were lying. He did give you control of his investments, in a greater degree, after his son's death!"

"I was not lying. It was the way you put the question."

"I'll put another. The day after Seth Brangwyn was sent to the penitentiary, did you not acquire from Mr. Nally a block of city, State and Government bonds worth approximately twenty-three million dollars?"

"I bought them from him!"

"With what?"

"My check!"

"Where is that check?"

"Among my vouchers!"

"I beg to differ with you. I have had your various checking accounts systematically investigated. You did not put through a check for twenty-three million dollars on that or any other date!"

Jimmy saw, in growing excitement, that Elery Gans was beginning to sweat. What was Storm going to prove?

MAITLAND HAMP'S objection, his request that this entire line of testimony be thrown out, was met by Judge Holden's question:

"Mr. Storm, just what is the purpose of all this?"

"Your Honor," Storm answered, "have I not every right to attempt to impeach the credibility of this or any other witness the State presents?"

"Is that what you are doing?"

"Yes, Your Honor. I wish to prove to you that this witness is thoroughly unreliable and that his business honor is open to grave question."

"You may proceed, Mr. Storm. Let me ask a question. Are you attempting to establish that this witness, over a period of years, has taken the opportunity to divert to his personal account funds which belonged to Mr. Nally?"

Before Storm could answer, Elery Gans started to rise. Storm cried: "One moment, Mr. Gans. I'm not through."

"I won't answer your questions," Gans snapped. "Joshua Nally was like a father to me. I handled his investments because he was frittering his money away. He lost millions on wildcat speculations—oil stocks, radio stocks, airplane stocks. Every dollar I own I came by honestly."

"Wait a minute," Storm stopped him. "You're here to answer questions. Answer this one. How much was Joshua Nally worth on the day of his death?"

"I don't know. His affairs were hopelessly entangled." "Isn't it true that a year ago, even after the stock-market crash, he was worth, conservatively, more than forty million dollars?"

"I tell you, I don't know."

"And you don't know how much he was worth on the day of his death?"

"No." "Do you know how much Graymoor is worth?"

"I should say it is worth about sixty thousand dollars." "But you do not know how much, in investments, was represented in the estate he left his niece, Miss Brangwyn?"

"No. I don't know." "Your Honor," Storm said, "I should like to introduce as material evidence for the defense this package which represents the result of two weeks of day and night investigation into Mr. Nally's accounts by Chester and Blake, the public accountants. To save time, I will sum up their findings. The estate which Joshua Nally willed to his niece and which the newspapers have estimated at between fifty and one hundred millions is worth, exclusive of Graymoor—exactly nothing!"

He paused. A bailiff was at his elbow. In the hush, his voice could be heard in all corners of the courtroom.

"Mr. Storm, that long-distance call you were waiting for has come."

Jimmy started to rise, then settled back. He wouldn't interfere now. He watched Storm race up the aisle, saw the glass-paneled door swing to behind him.

The courtroom broke into an excited buzz. For a time, Judge Holden paid no attention. He was listening to Maitland Hamp, who was talking furiously, brandishing his hands, gesturing at the man in the witness-stand.

Jimmy looked at Elery Gans and marveled. The man, for all his mildness and meekness, must have nerves of iron. Storm had all but called him a thief. Evidently Storm could back up his sensational statements with proof.

A bailiff banged smartly with a gavel. Judge Holden looked up and said angrily that if order was not restored he would have the courtroom cleared. Silence obtained magically as Storm returned.

Jimmy searched his face, but it betrayed nothing. It was as blank, as expressionless, as it had been that night when Jimmy cut through the hedge with tinsnips and became the first reporter to exchange words with the "mystery man of Malvern."

What had Storm learned from Professor Ingal—five thousand miles away?

Maitland Hamp said harshly: "Your Honor, I respectfully request that every line of the testimony taken under this cross-examination be stricken from the record, as irrelevant and immaterial."

"Overruled!"

Storm confronted his witness. "Mr. Gans," he said, "are you thirsty? Would you like a drink of water?"

"No."

"Are you sure you wouldn't like a drink of water?"

"I'm sure."

"Will you step down from the stand a moment? Please sit in this chair. I want you near by when I question a certain witness."

Maitland Hamp declared that this was irregular. Storm told Judge Holden that he wished merely to expedite the taking of testimony.

"I will want Mr. Gans back on the stand in a few minutes. It may be necessary to question him while my witness is on the stand."

Judge Holden ruled that if this plan would expedite matters, Storm could proceed.

"Who is this witness, Mr. Storm?"

"Dr. Vincent B. Hall," Storm replied. "Will Dr. Hall come forward, please?"

A STOUT man of fifty with an iron-gray toothbrush mustache rose from the front row of spectators and made his way to the stand.

Upon being duly sworn, he testified, in answer to Storm's questions, that he was a stomach specialist, that books he had written on the subject were standard textbooks and reference works in many medical universities, that his residence was New York.

It was perfunctory testimony. Jimmy knew that Dr. Vincent B. Hall was the foremost stomach specialist in America.

Storm: "Doctor Hall, were you in court this morning when Mr. Daniel Hoyt, the city chemist, gave his testimony?"

"I was."

"Did you hear Mr. Hoyt state that Joshua Nally died from the effects of cyanide of potassium poisoning at about four-fifteen and that his stomach was pumped out at six the same evening?"

"Yes. I heard him say that." Dr. Hall's voice was deep, gruff. He was, in looks and voice, typical of his profession.

"You heard him say, in other words, that Mr. Nally's stomach was pumped out approximately one and three quarters hours after his death?"

"Yes."

"In the course of your practice, Doctor, extending over a period of years, have you ever been called upon to pump out a stomach?"

The Doctor smiled and nodded.

"Many, Doctor?"

"Thousands. I've pumped as many as fifty stomachs in a day."

"For what purpose?"

"To make diagnoses in connection with the rapidity of patients' digestive processes."

"Isn't it true that you have made an exhaustive study of the comparative time intervals consumed by various kinds of food in normal and abnormal digestion?"

"Yes. That's so."

"Have you ever pumped a stomach shortly after a patient has eaten, say, cake? To be specific—cup-cakes?"

"Often."

"How long have you found that the normal, healthy stomach takes to digest—say, a cup-cake?"

"The normal stomach would digest a properly mascerated—"

"A properly what?"





"Then," Storm barked, "you would say he had not eaten a cup-cake?"

"—A properly masticated, chewed, cup-cake—or any hydrocarbon, for that matter—in from one and a half to two hours."

Jimmy was perplexed. After all, the eminent specialist was merely substantiating Dan Hoyt's testimony.

"And did you hear Mr. Hoyt say, Doctor, that the contents of Mr. Nally's stomach, pumped out slightly under two hours after death, consisted of a liquid? In other words, that digestion was complete?"

"Yes. I heard him say that."

"Well, what do you think of his testimony?"

"I think it was very well meant, but I would be inclined to say that the city chemist has not made as thorough a study of digestion as he might have. In his testimony, he stated that a stomach goes on digesting whatever its contents may be for some time after death."

"Wasn't that right?"

"Yes. It was right. The only misstatement he made concerned the length of time a stomach will continue digesting after death. I have examined many stomachs after death—some a few minutes after, others, hours after. The digestive condition is always the same. A man's stomach ceases digesting within a very few minutes after death."

Jimmy gasped.

"Then," Storm said quickly, "if Joshua Nally had eaten a cup-cake at his afternoon tea, his stomach would have stopped digesting it a very few minutes after his death?"

"Yes!"

"And the contents of the stomach, two hours later, would have been the same as they were two minutes after his death?"

"Precisely the same."

"Then," Storm barked, "if no evidences of undigested cup-cakes, eaten a minute or two before his death, were found two hours after his death, would you say that he had not eaten a cup-cake?"

"That is what I would certainly say!"

His last word was drowned in an uproar of voices. Jimmy Mullen was too astonished to think. Maitland Hamp had raced across the courtroom and was talking with wild gestures to Dan Hoyt, the city chemist. Dr. Hall was getting down from the stand.

It took ten minutes for bailiffs to restore order. Yet, Jimmy wanted to know, just what had been proved? True, Dr. Hall had conclusively proved that Joshua Nally

had not eaten a cup-cake. The case against Corrine Brangwyn had been carefully built upon the cup-cakes she had supposedly poisoned with cyanide. Just how did the case stand?

In spite of the evidence, Jimmy still refused to believe that Corrine Brangwyn had not poisoned her uncle. She had attempted to poison him with the cakes. When the attempt had failed, she had resorted to another method.

That seemed logical to Jimmy; yet it was very bewildering. The State's case against Miss Brangwyn would surely have to be entirely rebuilt.

Was Dr. Vincent Hall lying? Had Anthony Storm paid him liberally for perjured testimony? No, that was entirely too fantastic. But what had Storm learned from Italy?

Elery Gans was back on the stand. Maitland Hamp was pleading now with Judge Holden, and the Judge was firmly shaking his head, refusing him. Jimmy caught the words, "Mistrial," "Postponement for securing additional evidence." But Judge Holden continued to shake his head. He seemed interested in nothing but the inquiry Storm was addressing at the witness.

Suddenly quiet, the courtroom heard Storm say: "Mr. Gans, aren't you thirsty? Wouldn't you like a drink of water?"

The witness shook his head. Jimmy thought he looked, behind that mask of mildness, frightened.

Judge Holden said: "Mr. Storm, it seems to me you have led us to the brink of some astonishing disclosure. Will you tell me just what you are trying to establish?"

"I am trying, Your Honor," Storm answered, "to establish the defendant's innocence. If this witness will truthfully answer my questions, I am certain I can do so."

"Proceed with your questioning."

"But Mr. Gans' voice is so low, so husky, that he can hardly be heard. I wish, for the sake of the court stenographer, Mr. Gans would take a drink of water."

"Bring the witness a glass of water, bailiff," the Judge ordered.

Storm's hands were in his vest pockets.

"I want to go back over some of your recent testimony," he said. "When Burke Nally was killed, Joshua Nally's only direct heir was removed. Wasn't that so?"

"Do you want me to answer that?" Gans asked.

"I asked it for that reason."

"Isn't the answer contained in the question?"

"Will you kindly answer it?"

"I—suppose the answer would be yes."

"Aren't you sure?"

"I'm afraid I'm a little confused, Mr. Storm, by what Dr. Hall said. It's amazing!"

"I'll repeat the question," Storm said grimly. "When Burke Nally was killed, Joshua Nally's only direct heir was removed. Isn't that so?"

"I guess it is," Gans answered, "but I'm quite upset. Can't this go over to some other time?"

"I'm afraid not. I want to ask you another question. When Seth Brangwyn went to prison on October fifteenth, wasn't the final obstacle to your control of the Nally fortune removed?"

Jimmy saw a glitter appear behind the thick lenses. Storm had struck fire at last through that remarkable layer of mildness.

"I will not answer such questions!" Gans said huskily. "You have deliberately accused me of diverting Mr. Nally's investments to my own account. I will not be bullied into stating what is not the truth. For eighteen years, I have been faithful to Mr. Nally's interests. I will not sit here now and listen to lying accusations! I will answer no more of your insulting questions!"

"Your Honor," Storm said, "I request that you insist that this witness answer my questions. I want nothing but the truth. I insist that he answer my questions."

"Mr. Storm, you know that I cannot compel this witness to answer your questions if he wishes not to answer them."

STORM said grimly: "Mr. Gans, don't answer this question if you don't want to. By a most thorough investigation, I have ascertained that on the day of Burke Nally's death, his father was worth between fifty-eight and sixty million dollars. Is that clear? A year and a few months ago, Joshua Nally was worth sixty million dollars—one of the largest fortunes in America. Yet a little more than a year later, at his death, he is penniless. Eighteen years ago, when you went to work for Mr. Nally, you were penniless. Today you are worth, conservatively, seventy millions. I want you to reconcile those two amazing facts."

"Is that a question?" Gans huskily demanded.

"Answer it!"

"I'll answer it! Joshua Nally may have been worth sixty millions before the crash. I told you he made unwise investments—put million after million into wildcat stocks. Look at them! He has trunks of them!"

"I have looked at them," Storm said. "I have found that he never bought them—that *you* bought them from firms that deal in dead stocks, and that you had them listed in his name."

Gans was staring at him now. His eyes behind the thick lenses seemed to swim. He started to get up—sagged back.

"Where's that water?" he gasped. "I want a drink of water."

The bailiff approached. He placed a tumbler full of water on the rail beside Elery Gans. The witness reached for it. Storm anticipated him.

"Wait," he said. "Answer one more question before you drink that water."

Jimmy gasped. He had seen *the flash of something green* as Storm whipped his hand from his vest pocket. He saw Storm's hand move deliberately out, and in a clenched fist, hover over the glass of water. He saw Gans' eyes behind the thick lenses widen and stare at Storm's hand.

Regardless of courtroom discipline, Jimmy sprang up. It was the emerald owl! The duplicate—or near-duplicate—that Professor Ingal had given Storm!

Gans seized the tumbler. He was staring at it. His eyes quickly shifted to Storm's hand which was open now, with the emerald owl displayed upon the palm.

In a steely voice, Storm cried: "This is the question: Isn't it true, Elery Gans, that you poisoned Burke Nally with this and framed Seth Brangwyn to acquire control of the Nally fortune? Isn't it true that you murdered Joshua Nally with this because he was on the verge of discovering how cleverly you had gone about becoming a new Napoleon of American finance?"

"No! No! I never saw it before!"

"Never?" Anthony Storm insisted mercilessly.

"Never!"—a gasp.

"Do you deny, Elery Gans, that you went into the shop of Peruigi Bartalano, in the Street of the Five Stars, in Florence, Italy, on November eighteenth, nineteen twenty-eight, at three in the afternoon and paid sixty-five hundred lira for this?"

Grasping the glass of water, Gans stared up at him. He licked his lips. Jimmy edged closer.

"Won't you answer my questions?" Storm thundered. "Must I bring witnesses five thousand miles to prove what I'm saying?"

Gans did not answer. He had pulled the glass of water over to one knee. His hand was shaking so that water spilled down the side of the tumbler.

"Don't drink that water!" Storm cried. "You know what this thing contains!"

He reached for the glass, but Gans anticipated him. He swiftly lifted the glass to his mouth, drank greedily. Gasping, he put the glass down. It slipped from his fingers, fell, and smashed.

Judge Holden cried: "Mr. Storm! What have you done? What is that thing?"

"A poison owl, Your Honor, carved from an emerald. It was used, I believe, by an Italian statesman in the Fifteenth Century to poison his political enemies."

"What does it contain—now?"

"Cyanide!" Gans gasped. His eyes fluttered. He gasped: "I'll take death this way—not in that chair!" Storm thrust his hands into his pockets. "I'm sorry, Elery," he said gently. "There's no cyanide in this. Nothing but water."

Gans started up from the chair—fell back and groaned.

"You see," Storm went on, "I'm going to need you. Before you go to the chair, it will be necessary to put you on trial for the ingenious way you appropriated the Nally fortune. According to the intention of Joshua Nally's will, some sixty or seventy millions are owing to Miss Brangwyn."

JIMMY MULLEN seated himself at his typewriter. He inserted a sheet of copy paper. He ran his fingers through his wild brown hair. He lighted a cigarette and tapped off, with one finger, a by line. Then, poking briskly at the keys, he wrote:

"In an exclusive interview given late last night to a *Post* reporter, Anthony Storm stated that the cost of securing the amazing mass of evidence with which he forced a confession from Elery Gans, was close to one million dollars.

"Asked what his plans were, Mr. Storm said: 'Miss Brangwyn has given me her permission to announce that we will be married as soon as Elery Gans has been tried.'

"Miss Brangwyn stated, in an exclusive interview to a *Post* reporter, that she would take every possible step to recover the huge fortune which Elery Gans filched from her uncle and to which she is the sole heir.

"Asked what her plans were, Miss Brangwyn said: 'I am motoring to the State penitentiary first thing in the morning to get my brother, for whom an official release is now being arranged by Mr. Storm.'

"When I have secured the Nally fortune, I intend to place every dollar of it at Mr. Storm's disposal for carrying on his plans to help unfortunates unjustly accused of crime."

After embroidering these statements in his best reportorial style, Jimmy Mullen sat back and gazed dreamily at the typewriter. He was wondering what a sixty-dollar-a-week reporter ought to do with a fifteen-thousand-dollar roadster that had just been presented to him.

Free Lances in Diplomacy

"The Peace-time War" describes one of those amazing and desperate sub-rosa battles sometimes fought between apparently friendly nations.

By CLARENCE HERBERT NEW

Illustrated by J. Fleming Gould

THE "ceiling" of the ship with her full load of sinister-looking "eggs" was approximately three thousand meters—consequently, it had been impossible to climb above the clouds and drizzling rain on the long westward flight until she ran out into clear starlight over the Saar valley. At that altitude, the drone of their three big screws would have been scarcely distinguishable from other noises to anyone on the ground—but just as a matter of practice, Grodnow threw in his recently perfected muffler which synchronized another beat with that of the screws in such a way as to diffuse and spread it until the noise lost most of its carrying-power. The most important part of the contrivance was that it accomplished this result with a diminution of not more than two per cent in the flying-power and enabled a plane to fly as low as three hundred meters at night without attracting the attention of anyone on the ground.

Moschiewitz, in one of the arm-seats bolted to the sides of the small mess-table, was nervously chewing the ragged ends of a dirty black beard as he smoked a long thick cigarette in a still longer jade holder. An irascible, unscrupulous little creature—a master chemist but a yellow coward in the air, of which he knew less than nothing and had no desire to learn—he was swaddled in a wool-lined suit and encumbered with a "chute-pack" strapped upon his back, and would have been morally certain to forget all about pulling the release-cord if ever he got up nerve or desperation enough to jump. As they were climbing after the take-off, he noticed that neither of his companions had bothered about "chutes"—and let out a horrified squeak when Grodnow asked how he proposed getting out of the cabin for a chance to jump.

"Why—why—open that door, of course! And step out upon the wing—"

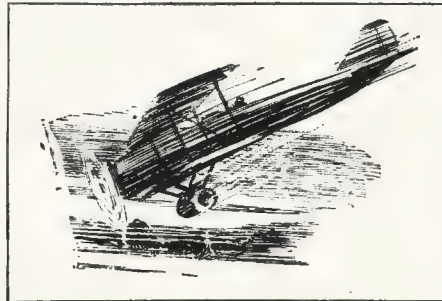
"At more than two hundred kilometers the hour? You might try opening that door at this speed, Moschiewitz—I'll hold your belt while you do it. Myself—I prefer the sliding hatch in the floor. That works with a good strong mechanical screw—even at that, you'd need to watch your step if you tried dropping out through it—to get clear!"

"Look! The man in Saarbrücken lied! There is *not* fog!"

"No—he said there wouldn't be, after midnight."

"But—but—we then create the fog, is it not? Eh?"

"Yes—but not along the Saar. I put the psychology of the thing up to the High Command, and they agreed. If we do anything against Berlin just now, they will see it as direct retaliation for their destruction of our flying-field and fleet of planes—discount it as something quite



easy for them to cope with. But if something frightful and menacing occurs in some of the European States—occurs again in others—coming nearer and nearer the German borders—finally leaving a path of death through Berlin itself, the fear of something unknown is created—possibly even wholesale panic. If we can pull this experiment off half a dozen times without having it traced to us in any way it may start a condition

of dread that will go far toward stopping all human activities. The only doubt in my mind is whether your formulæ will stand up as well in open-air practice over flat country as it did in that little enclosed valley where your laboratory is located. For example, every army and navy on the globe knows that an impenetrable smoke-barrage can be laid down to screen brigade and fleet movements for a limited space of time. But in order to get the psychological effect we're after, we must have something more like fog than smoke—in texture, action and smell. It must lie fairly thick along the ground for at least four hours—that's our minimum. This flight has been left to my discretion. I know there's a fog in London that will last another twelve hours at least. Apparently there's none in Belgium. Point is, if we drop, say, three of your 'eggs' in any water around Liege, Antwerp or one of the smaller towns, can you guarantee a spreading fog that will last four hours and be fairly deadly in spots?"

The diminutive chemist laughed contemptuously.

"You shall see, my friend—you shall see! All you must do is hit the water from a sufficient height to burst the container. The rest you may leave to my formula!"

"Cursed if I understand the principle even yet!"

"No—of course; you have not the brain. But look you—I offer just a kindergarten explanation. The effect, mind you, is immediately to vaporize a large quantity of the water—too heavy to rise more than thirty feet, perhaps, yet sufficiently buoyant to be held in suspension close to the ground, and deadly enough to asphyxiate any human or animal lungs not in an exceptionally healthy condition."

"Suppose there is no body of water in or near the town?"

"How, then, do the people drink, wash or cook? But still—taking your question seriously—a campaign against partly uninhabited country would be a waste of time and money. Against towns in an arid district—served by wells—we merely ascend to high altitude and explode bombs loaded with another formula which induces precipitation in the form of rain. And upon even very wet ground, I produce fog. Of course that point is merely academic, Grodnow. We gain nothing by attacking sparsely settled districts; our objectives are crowded villages, towns or

cities, all of which have bodies of water in or about them. It makes no difference to me whether the water is fresh or salt. Natural fog such as they have all over the British Isles saves us a lot of trouble and is much safer for our operations. But where there is no fog—well, we produce it—that's all! And the beauty of it is that we leave no trace whatever. If your ship crashes and our containers are found—But they wouldn't be! Every one of them would burst from shock—no trace of them left—nothing to suggest a chemically produced fog."

Grodnow nodded. "Nothing to identify the plane, either—not a word, figure or letter upon the motors or any part of the bus-structure, which is painted horizon blue outside, varnished inside. We're all three exceptional linguists—if captured, we might be French, English or Italian."

"And ten other ships are waiting to be used in a similar way any time the Command thinks it advisable—if this flight is a success. Ten ships with equally good linguists—quite as unidentifiable if forced down. Berlin will be doing a bit of thinking, presently."

"Hmph! Berlin isn't the only place where they'll soon realize that there's something loose in the air!"

"Where's this thing going to end, Grodnow?" asked the third man. "Total annihilation of the human race?"

"Depends upon whether the governments with the most powerful means of destruction will actually stake their existence on it for the sake of world-conquest—or hesitate. Myself—I look for a stalemate, eventually. The price and risks of conquest will be too heavy."

By noon of the next day, the press syndicates had flashed to every leading newspaper on the globe a report of unprecedented fog in isolated parts of Belgium—with the comment that for some unknown reason it seemed to have a very serious effect upon everyone subject to lung-trouble—over sixty persons having succumbed, apparently to some unusual quality in the fog. There was no suggestion as to that quality being anything but atmospheric, aggravated by the local chimney-smoke held in suspension by it. In London—where "pea-soup" fog is accepted as among the regular phenomena, against which one closes every window and endeavors to get along on stale air until the murk lifts—the extra pulmonary deaths in the thirty hours of atmospheric density failed to strike anybody as unusual until the hospitals commented upon it to the press as being some thirty-eight deaths over and above the fog average. The doctors said that with the permission of one woman's family, they had performed an autopsy which showed that the lung-tissue had been eaten into by some corrosive influence in a way that was different from the results of lethal gas observed during the German War and yet more or less suggested it. They admitted that carbon-monoxide in chimney fumes very likely would produce the effect observed in the autopsy—and the reporters were quite satisfied to write up the occurrence as "fog of sufficient weight to fetch the chimney smoke down to ground-level, where the over-susceptible victims had breathed it in." This explanation satisfied everyone—nobody gave the matter another thought at the time.

A fortnight later, two of the Foreign Office men were taking what was supposed to be a few days' "leave" in a Luxembourg village close to the German border—a town

"Watch the stuff comin' through the window! I say! Rather suffocatin'—what?"



built along the banks of a small river at the foot of cliffs, upon the top of which were the *cinquocento* castle that gave the town its name and several residences of the more wealthy townspeople. They had known the Count and Countess in the castle for some years—had been spending several of their evenings there, enjoying the society of two English cousins—attractive girls, whose vivacity was livening up the garrison officers and the younger set in the town as well. Captain Frazier and Lieutenant John Holme had found very comfortable quarters at the Inn, down by the river—their windows overlooking the stream with its barge-traffic and canoeists. Officers from the tiny Luxembourg army dined with them when they were spending the evening down on the lower level. Upon the night of the sixteenth, two of them were smoking with the F. O. men in their living-room on the second floor. One had been in Belgium two weeks before, and was describing the suffocating sensation he had experienced from the fog there:

"We really didn't get the worst of it, at that—because we happened to be at a house upon higher ground, I suppose—but it must have been pretty bad down in the center of the town. Over sixty men and women died from the effects of the fog—a number of horses, cattle and dogs, as well. Fortunately we don't run much to fogs along this stretch of the river—Eh? What was that?"

"Sounded as if three or four motorcars had dropped into the river, one after the other—sort of a heavy *chug*, if you get what I mean. Water's fairly deep along here, I fancy."

"*Oui*—twelve or fourteen meters in the deeper spots—less than that above here, and in some of the German territory below."

Frazier got up and threw open the diamond-paned window through which, but half an hour before, they had noticed the moon's reflection on the water. There was now no moon in sight, or stars either. Lights on tugs and barges were becoming dimmer even as they looked at them.

"Thought you said you didn't run much to fogs along here, Raoul! What's spreading over the river an' banks seems to be a pretty good imitation of our London 'pea-soup'! Wonder if it's sun-spots or anything like that which is causing abnormal weather conditions all over Europe? Those were exceptional fogs in Belgium, two weeks ago—so was that one in London, where we're used to 'em. This one is almost thick enough to cut. My word! Watch the beastly stuff comin' in through the window, will you! I say! . . . Rather suffocatin'—what? Not gettin' you, is it, Raoul? You're lookin' a bit done!"

Holme thrust a hand inside his service-coat, and brought

out a small packet wrapped in oiled silk. Pulling Captain Lefereau's handkerchief from the pocket of his tunic, Holme sprinkled into it a few grains of powder from the packet—rolled the handkerchief and tied it snugly under the Captain's nose, telling Lefereau to breathe through it. Frazier, with a nod of approval, was doing the same for the other officer—quickly loading his own handkerchief the same way.

"Chemical used as a neutralizer in the latest gas-masks, you know. John an' I have made a habit of carryin' packets of it in our pockets when we're knockin' about the Continent—a Downing Street man never knows what he may run into, anywhere. I say, Raoul! . . . Get to the phone down in the bar, quickly! Have 'em put you through to the garrison at once—fetch a detail down here in gas-masks, with all the extra masks they can lay hands on! This stuff is goin' to kill a lot of people unless we can cover up their noses an' get 'em on higher ground immediately—or out of the town altogether. I'll go with you—you're a bit groggy. Do what you can for the people in this building an' near-by ones, John—get 'em away from the river!"

Lefereau barely managed to get the order over the telephone to army headquarters—every breath was a painful effort. Frazier was insisting upon taking him up to the top of the cliffs, but he gasped out:

"Mademoiselle Josephine! She's here playing bridge—house of the burgomaster—top of the street—fog may not be so bad there. Sister remained—up at castle. You must go for Mademoiselle at once, my friend! Assure yourself they are safe! I shall manage, I think—not walking too fast. One cannot walk fast in this—murk! Go—*mon Capitaine!* Go—quickly!"

Mention of the English girl's danger was all the spur Frazier needed, for he'd found the Blythe girls jolly good pals. Like all exceptionally bright young officers who qualify for the diplomatic service, Sandy Frazier had a bump of location which enabled him to orient himself on the darkest night in any part of the world. So, although he scarcely could see a hand before his face, he hurried along up the river street—up another at right angles—until he reached the Seventeenth Century house of the burgomaster and found the front entrance wide open, with eddying fog drifting into the wide hall, though of a thinner consistency than down near the inn. Upon the floor at the foot of the main stairway lay the butler, painfully gasping for breath.

Captain Frazier closed the big hall door as he came in, and bending over the man, he was able to distinguish the words:

"His Excellency—the ladies—on the roof, I think. Messieurs André and Paul—gone for assistance. Ah-h-h! . . . Dying, m'sieur!"

"Fancy not, old chap! . . . Stuff doesn't seem to be quite so deadly around here. You prob'ly got a good lungful when you opened the door. But come! . . . Put your arm over my shoulders an' I'll manage to get you up on the roof with the others.—wait a bit! . . . Your pantry's back of the dining-room? I'll get a wet towel—you can hold it over your nose."

Josephine Blythe had also thought of wet towels for the burgomaster's family and herself. So the party on the roof were not seriously affected. As soon as Frazier had assured himself of this, he explained about the neutralizing chemical which he and Lieutenant Holme so fortunately had had in their pockets—saying that, of course, in any concentrated gas-attacks, the small quantity one could use in a handkerchief would afford but temporary security, as one full breath of any lethal gas at its maximum strength would put a person too far out of business to think coherently of antidotes. But he hoped that even their limited supply might save a few lives while the fog was at its worst.

Returning to the river level, with his wet handkerchief tightly tied over nose and mouth—the chemical sprinkled between its folds—he found two officers with a detail of ten men, in gas-masks, carrying men, women and children out of houses along the street—strapping spare masks from the barracks over their faces and loading them into motor-lorries, which ran them up to the castle level, and came back for more.

After satisfying themselves that everything possible was being done for those not already dead, Frazier and Holme returned to the castle—where the Count was questioning the refugees as to what they could remember of their experiences. In the mass of more or less conflicting accounts, the two F. O. men presently noticed one rather curious omission. It seemed that but one person out of all who had been in houses overlooking the river had noticed any sound like the dropping of three or four heavy bodies into the water. This one woman, however, had heard a sound which appeared to be very much like that heard by the four officers at the inn—and had at once opened her window to look out. She said that about fifty meters upriver from her house, a barge was coming down loaded with wooden packing-cases measuring perhaps two meters each way. The moon had sunk below the horizon, but she made out circles of ripples spreading over the glassy surface of the water from that barge. So she assumed that some of the packing-cases had become dislodged and fallen overboard. It was a simple explanation. The Count said he would have that barge traced as soon as the fog lifted and see how many of the cases were missing. Later, sitting in a corner of the big drawing-room, Sandy Frazier expressed the opinion to his brother officer that the jettisoning of those packing-cases undoubtedly must have been what they had heard—but John Holme wouldn't quite agree with him.



"I mean to know what's in those cases. There's something back of this fog business."

"I say, old chap—suppose we don't consider this bloody fog as a separate occurrence? Eh? A fortn't back, there were apparently the same sort of fogs at three diff'rent towns in Belgium when, a few moments before, there'd been no sign of fog whatever. An' a lot of people asphyxiated by 'em! Tonight again—we get one of those same deadly fogs here, when a few moments before the moon had been shining an' there wasn't a cloud in the sky. In a place where they all say fog is almost unheard-of, mind you! Now—natural phenomena occur every time after certain well-understood indications that they may be expected to occur—with greater or less intensity. They do not, in three successive cases within two weeks, go straight off the bat with something our weather forecasters never have observed before! I'm int'rested in those packing-cases, myself! An' I mean to know what's in 'em—just as soon as the Count locates that barge. Then I'll talk him into draggin' the river along here for the ones that went overboard; there's something back of this fog business, if you ask me. What?"

"Nons'nse, man—nons'nse! There's been a bit of wind all the evening, d'ye see—blown the blasted stuff along this valley from some place where they're usin' chemicals in manufacturin' works—"

"Well, where would you locate those works? The wind has been from the west since noon, you know—gradually blowin' up fresher. Above this town, there'll be no place along the river with manufacturin' works of any size within thirty or forty miles. The large German plants which might generate this chimney-gas, or whatever it is, are a good ten miles below here—due east—to the leeward of us. What?"

"My word! . . . You're raisin' points that hadn't occurred to me at all, John—an' you're dead right! We'll just have a look-see into the matter of those packin'-cases in the morning."

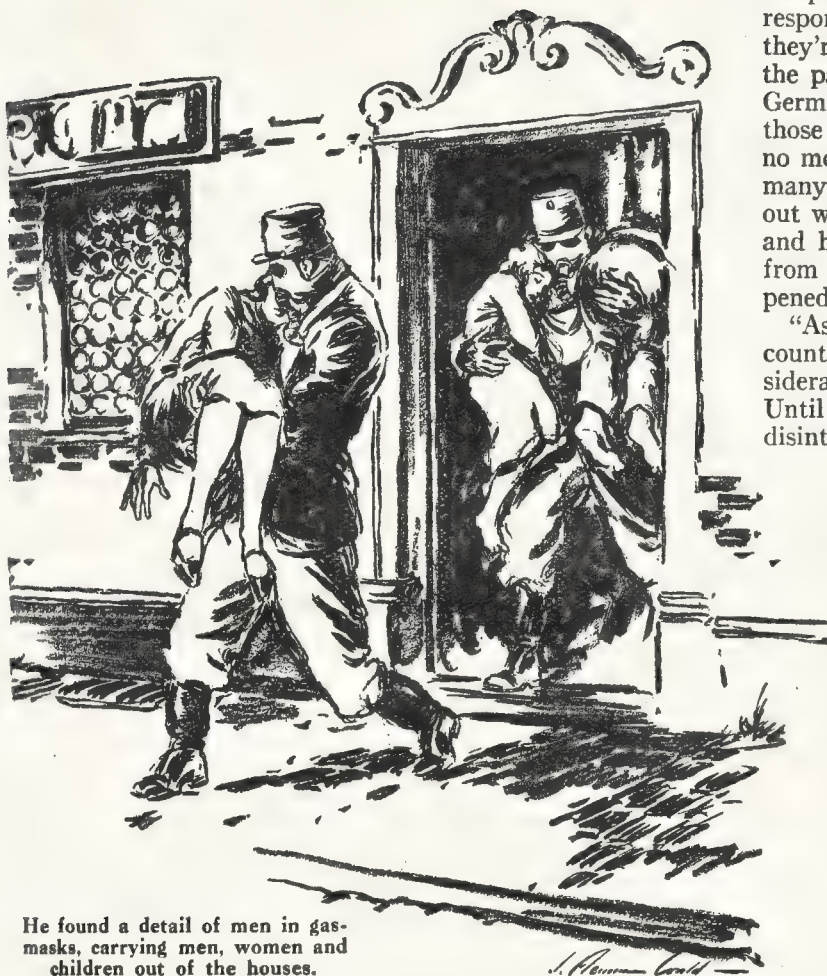
But in this they struck unexpected snags. In the clear forenoon sunlight—with nothing to indicate what had caused the night of horror, and not the least trace of fog for miles—every barge or other boat which had been near the town was found aground in shallows along the river-bank, with the bodies of all who had been aboard them where they had fallen, gasping their lives out. The barge with the packing-cases was a mile or more downstream, jammed into the mud of the bank. Her manifest and invoices showed that the cases should contain wooden toys and games from a town several miles up the river, where the entire population made a business of carving them. From the manifest, not one of the cases appeared to be missing, so dragging the river for them would have been that much wasted effort. The woman who said she had heard the splashes and seen the ripples admitted that she was so ill from the effects of the fog, a few minutes afterward, that she really couldn't be sure her imagination wasn't playing tricks upon her. But that didn't shake Holme's opinion in the least—both he and Frazier had distinctly heard those splashes. If not from packing-cases falling overboard, what had caused them?



Next day, the two F. O. men returned to their duties in Downing Street, still puzzling over that fog in Luxembourg and its seeming relation to the previous ones in Belgium and London. The thing obsessed them. Twice they were upon the point of having a conference with their Chief, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, but decided it would be a waste of time on both sides—even if they had something a lot more definite to show. The Rt. Hon. Albert Sanderson was a member of a Labor Cabinet, and in the unenviable position of having neither the inclination nor foolishness to go half as far in his foreign policy as the radicals in his party insisted upon, and not caring to risk the storm of abuse from the rest of his party if he conducted the affairs of the Foreign Office as time-honored usage warned him to do. So, after some reflection as to where they might get action in the matter if their growing suspicions proved to have any foundation, the two approached the Marquess of Dyvnaint in St. James's Club one afternoon, asking if he could give them an hour or so that evening, and were promptly invited to dine at the famous Trevor mansion in Park Lane. When they reached the house, they found that the dinner-guests included a well-known United States Senator,—an old friend of the Trevors,—General Lord Ivonmore, of the British War Office—Earl Lammerford of St. Ives—and Prince Abdool of Afridistan.

When they were in the big library after dinner, the Marquess told the F. O. men that two of the other guests had accompanied him on an unreported flight over Russia several weeks before, during which they had been eyewitnesses of the destruction accomplished by mysterious disintegrating-ray planes whose secret Captain Starleigh of the Foreign Office had obtained at the risk of his life while disguised as a telephone-repair man in Berlin.

"Our wireless intelligence bureau in Whitehall reported a hint from Berlin to Moscow, a week later, that if their demands for developing and controlling certain mines in the Nijni Novgorod district were not complied with very



He found a detail of men in gas-masks, carrying men, women and children out of the houses.

shortly, they would also destroy—or permit to be destroyed—everything within the Kremlin enclosure. So our War Department, the French Cabinet,—through M. Rabaud who also accompanied us,—and one of the United States Senate Committees,—through Senator Branton here,—have been watching developments in that quarter with the most intense interest. That's why your communication in regard to this unusually deadly fog struck me as something the Senator an' Lord Ivonmore should hear, inasmuch as there may be some connection between it and what we saw from our plane. For reasons of State—and because the present Labor Government is not in sympathy with any sort of British espionage in other countries, regardless of the fact that we are overrun with spies from other nations here in London, Fred Starleigh made no definite official report to the Foreign Office of what he had learned in Berlin. It is of the utmost importance to the British Empire as well as to France, Italy, the United States and Japan, that Berlin gets no hint of what we actually know, and saw their ray planes do—because it gives us all the time until they do get wind of it to set our scientists at work in the laboratories discovering the secret of that disintegrating ray and some effectual defense against it—prevents their precipitating a war somewhere in which those planes will be used."

"Well—we knew that Starleigh had discovered something big and had a close shave of it, getting back alive. Those of our personnel who have remained with the F. O. during two or three successive Governments understand perfectly that it would be useless an' dangerous to approach our present Chief with any such information or with details as to how it was obtained by men who were officially on leave. Holme an' I have no clear idea as to who or what is behind

these fogs—whether they are a freak of natural atmospherics or something for which human agency is responsible. But we've a strengthening opinion that they're the forerunner of some deadly offensive upon the part of some unknown government—possibly the German Fascists—possibly the Reds. Either one of those lots will sacrifice innumerable human lives with no more compunction than they'd feel in crushing so many ants or bugs just by way of experimental testing out when they've developed some particularly deadly and horrible weapon. You mentioned an ultimatum from Berlin to Moscow, Marquess. . . . What happened as a result of that?"

"As far as we can ascertain from men now in both countries—nothing, so far. And that one fact is considerably puzzling to us who made that secret flight. Until some effective defense is worked out against that disintegrating ray—well, Berlin unquestionably has the world by the throat—has the means of compelling acceptance of any demands she may care to make. Now—to suppose that Moscow has the nerve to refuse compliance with the terms of that ultimatum after the stunning demonstration they got is to give the Reds credit for a lot more real courage—or foolhardiness—than they've ever shown since the Revolution. Berlin can well afford to be leisurely in carrying out its threats—but I'll wager that their High Command is considerably puzzled over the silence from Moscow."

"Suppose these death-dealing fogs should prove to be some sort of deliberate answer to the ultimatum—taking a little heavier toll with each recurrence—pulled off in other countries first, in order to impress every State in Europe that some new, mysterious an' destructive force is at work, before any of the phenomena gradually appear within the German borders. Eh—Marquess? That's practically Holme's belief, an' I fancy I'm coming around to it—though we've not one shred of actual evidence to support it, d'ye see."

"Not more than one person in a hundred thousand would admit that your theory is anything but arrant nonsense, Frazier—just pure moonshine!" Trevor declared. "The rest would point you out as examples of the pernicious influences which go to make any sort of Government espionage provocative to a declaration of war. Those of us who have served in Parliament an' the Cabinet through some of the Conservative administrations know better than that! If it were not for our managin' to keep up more or less unofficial espionage, we'd have some foreign nation in possession of our territory before we realized that the world is not even ten per cent pacifist an' never can be—human nature bein' what it is!" The Marquess turned to Earl Lammerford. "Lammy, you've heard Frazier an' Lieutenant Holme describe the occurrences of that night in the Luxembourg town. What they heard—what they saw—an' what they couldn't see because of the fog. What impression do you get from those fogs—an' their account of what they went through?"

"Fancy I'd have to be where one of 'em was operatin' before I'd get any clear idea. Did anyone in that town recall a noise like a plane over the town, Frazier?"

"No. That occurred to me in the morning, after the fog had disappeared—I asked a number of persons the question. There's a lot of flyin' over Luxembourg from both sides—they're quite familiar with the drone of a plane overhead. But everyone was positive that no ship had been anywhere near the town."

"Couldn't extra packing-cases which were not a part of the toy shipm'nt—not even on the manifest at all—have been somewhere on the deck of that barge?"

"Through collusion with the Master or helmsman? Aye—that occurred to us. Everyone on board was dead—no chance of gettin' evidence from 'em. We motored up to the town where the cases were shipped—found the navvies who handled 'em—their figures tallied with the barge's manifest. We used these points in persuadin' the burgo-master to have the river dragged. He said the current was pretty rapid under the surface—would have carried anything some distance downstream. But several bodies and other stuff we found in the deep holes had been there for months or years. Several old rusted motorcars had been under water a year at least."

"H-m-m—a thin container, such as we've developed in South Devon for aerial gas-bombs, would burst upon striking the water—the fragm'nts might be carried downstream for miles. I say, George! We've commercial agents of our own—aye, an' quite a number who might be classed as 'private inquiry agents'—in places all over the globe. Suppose we have our wireless intelligence bureau get every one of them on the Continent tonight, by radiophone, with orders to report at once any appearance whatever of fog in their neighborhood—ordering also that they provide themselves with the latest type of gas-mask an' keep it where it's available in a hurry, noticing particularly how the fog seems to be affecting the people on the streets. Each one of those men is provided with one of the Trevor patent pocket-microphones. When fog appears, they are to listen through those microphones for any sounds like those made by a plane—both motors and screws."

"GOOD suggestion, Lammy!" Trevor approved. "Call up the Bureau and make a start. We've good friends among the aviators—an' can arrange with them in a confidential hint that we'd like a report upon any ships they see with no distinctive markings on them. We happen to know that there are such ships in the air because we've seen an' been unable to identify them—but a pair of twelve-power prism-binoculars can get a lot of information."

"You seem to assume, Marquess, that if there is any human agency behind these deadly fogs, it must have something to do with an airplane."

"Logically—how could anything of the sort be pulled off without a plane? In individual cases, of course, a secret agent might produce a smoke-screen or something resembling fog from an empty building at the lowest level—at night—without being spotted. But that would be a picayune, retail proposition—nothing like big enough for a wholesale effect—not mysterious enough to repeat with any margin of safety. No! Anything like fogs on a scale big enough to kill a hundred persons—carried out in several places at the same time—would have to use planes."

"But—I say! There were two of those fogs in Belgium—one in London—one in Luxembourg. If planes were used—somebody unquestionably must have heard them! In a single instance, they might not—in four, they most assuredly would."

"No, Ivonmore—you chaps in the War Office refused to buy my patented muffler for airplanes on the ground that it cut down the speed too much—you had other objections also, but that was the main one. The muffler only showed an eight per cent loss of speed even then—since that time, we've experimented until we can fly at not more than a thousand feet over a city without making a sound perceptible to anyone on the ground—unless, of course, he were listening through microphones highly amplified. Well, d'ye see, any chaps who were pulling a stunt like this fog would certainly work out something to deaden the sound

of their ships an' yet lose practically no speed, as our muffler now does."

"Suppose you get word from some of your agents that fog is appearin' in their vicinity and that they've heard something like a plane overhead. What would you propose to do?"

"The agents will have arranged with near-by aviators for quick communication by telephone—they'll be in the air prob'ly before the other plane can get out of sight. That would be a lucky combination of circumst'nces—luckier than ordinarily would happen. But if we keep persistently tryin' it out, we're likely to ascertain within a month or so whether there is human agency behind these fogs or not."

"Suppose your aviators do chase some mysterious plane—do you fancy its pilot will head for home?"

"Not! But the aviator will keep after him—force him down—look over his bus. Y'see, Ivonmore—thanks to Sandy Frazier an' John Holme, we're gettin' suspicious about these fogs several months ahead of what those rotters are figurin' upon. If it proves that we're right, we'll soon have an air-patrol from every State in Europe after those bounders."

"But still you'll not be within miles of handling such a menace effectively! The danger from this proposition lies in whatever the secret of those death-dealing fogs may be. If the fiends who worked it out are chased too thoroughly in the air, they can easily produce the fog in some other way. As a weapon in warfare, I'd say it might prove quite as effective as that disintegrating ray the Berliners have worked out. Admitting that the ray is a good bit more spectacular—when it comes to wiping out the population of a town or city, I doubt if the ray would do it any more effectively than this creeping, deadly fog which nobody understands or can protect themselves against. What is your candid opinion, Captain Frazier? Do you fancy that the deadly quality in that Luxembourg fog was present in full strength—an' that a good gas-mask would always be sufficient protection for a person escaping from it—or not?"

"No, Your Lordship! Mind you—all this discussion is based upon the possibility of human agency behind it. If the fog was purely an atmospheric effect, I doubt if any future recurrence would be much worse than what we experienced. If it was due to human agency, I fancy the best mask on the market would be of no use at all when the rotters responsible for it got down to using the thing as a lethal weapon—for this reason: Two of the garrison soldiers, masked, went into a cellar to rescue a man who'd been heard to shout, half an hour before,—an' died before they could reach the stairs again—in spite of their masks! You see, the fog was prob'ly very dense in that cellar an' its deadly quality full strength, or nearly so. It was that one incident more than anything else which convinced us that human intelligence had something to do with the phenomena. The brutes who worked it out had no particular purpose in killing a lot of innocent persons with their experiments. Of course the ones with weak lungs were pretty likely to go West—but they must have figured that the stuff wasn't quite strong enough to kill a healthy person, yet would scare everyone who heard of it."

FRAZIER was interrupted by the low chime of a bell. The Marquess rose from his chair and crossed the room to unbolt the hall-door. The big mansion, with its surrounding grounds, was protected by a system of electric contrivances which made it impossible for anyone not of the household either to see the interior of any room or overhear even a whisper in it. When the door was opened, the chief electrician and master mechanic of the Trevor Hall estate in South Devon—Harry Archer—came in,

looking surprisingly seedy. Nodding with a tired smile to those in the room, he sank down in one of the comfortable chairs near the great Jacobean fireplace.

"Where the mischief have you been, Harry?" Trevor asked.

"They told us over the private phone that you had disappeared somewhere with one of the latest amphibian planes, Monday morning, and turned up again Friday morning—yesterday. Presumably you've been down at Trevor Hall from that time to a couple of hours ago. But you look as if you've not slept for a week—what?"

Archer smiled wearily. "Not quite that—

I got five hours on the ship and three more in Schenectady, out of the four days. All because of that blasted German ray plane we saw at work and your offer, Marquess, of two hundred thousand, sterling, to any scientist who works out a defense against it within a year. That's a million dollars—cold. I fancy Senator Branton, here, must have communicated confidentially with Alexanderson and told him about the reward you offered—he phoned me from Schenectady Sunday night. They're a mighty decent lot over there—never even thought of trying to hog such a reward for themselves. Took the ground that the German disintegrating ray is a menace to the whole world, including the States—and that we're likely to get much quicker action if twenty or more leading men in electricity are all working at once upon it than if knowledge of the emergency is confined to four or five. If a satisfactory solution was obtained by four or five different men they were entirely satisfied to split the reward or even to waive it altogether if we seemed to be getting anywhere. With all due respect to the mighty able men we have on this side, I fancy Marconi is about the only one in the same class with that Schenectady lot. So I told the Professor I'd be over there in a couple of days—"

Lord Ivonmore was the slowest thinker of the party—and had forgotten the Marquess' famous wager of a year before.

"But—but—I say, Archer!" he interrupted. "Bit of a risk promisin' any such time as that—what? Flyin' east to west!"

"We don't consider it so, Your Lordship. The mail contracts now under consideration between His Majesty's postal department and the Postmaster General over there for air-mail service—Croydon to the Newark airport by way of Lisbon, Horta and Bermuda—call for a westerly service of thirty-eight hours, and thirty-two, eastbound, refueling at the three stops—seventy hours' flying-time for the round trip."

"But—I say! You couldn't have made any such time yourself?"

"Did a shade better—I'd guarantee to beat even that at the best speed of our new amphibians, because with no mail-load I'd make but two hops. With a direction-finder getting the east and west beats from our new broadcasting station on the island of Pico, one flies almost as straight as a bullet. I figured the air-distance at twelve hundred miles. Under cruising-load, our latest four-motor amphibians will keep close to a hundred and eighty or two hundred miles the hour—but I flew at reduced speed in order



"Got him, by Jove! Got him! Now watch the other one."

to save gas. Total time from South Devon, thirty-one hours and forty minutes including the two stops. Made the return trip in twenty-seven flat by cutting out Bermuda. Very close to what the Marquess made over a year ago with a plane not quite so good but with a shade better weather. The rest of the time I spent with those birds at Schenectady.

"The thing that's going to keep me from getting any sleep until I test it out is one of Jim Bolton's side-experiments which he told me about—said he hadn't seen any immediate use it might be put to, though he fancied it had possibilities. Seems he'd been trying to find out the degrees of penetrability in a Roöntgen ray. Well—when I began to realize just what field of experimentation this opened up, I nearly went balmy right there. If I get what I'm after—and I'm practically convinced that I'm within a few hours of it—I'll give Bolton full credit for the value of his suggestion, even though he doesn't think it worth following up at present!"

"Just what is it that you're after, Harry—if it's not too much of a secret—"

"Great cats! . . . Can't you see it, Marquess? The whole principle depends upon exactly the proper high-frequency to be used with different sorts of rays. Since I got back I've already demonstrated to my own satisfaction that when you do strike the right frequency, you can modify or control any of these wonderful rays we now know. Point's this: If I can project very high-frequency current between one of those German ray planes and the ground, I'd almost be willing to swear that I can either break up that disintegrating ray into its original electrons or short-circuit it—with the chances much in favor of the 'short'. If I get either effect—good night! And that's only one thing we're likely to work out within a week; there's another—almost as big!"

"What's that? My word, man—no wonder you couldn't sleep!"

"Well—I fancy that all of you know about the big reward offered by the Marquess and Earl Lammerford a year ago for any practical remedy for the danger in flying through fog—a hundred thousand, sterling, for anything to control fog or render it negligible in flying—no time limit on this reward. The wireless direction-finder—the altimeter—the two-way receiving and transmitting-sets on the planes—all help to navigate more or less safely in spite

of the fog, though they don't solve the problem. But—my scientists and I are now almost convinced that a very high-frequency current projected from a directional transmitter—provided the exact frequency is found by experimentation for varying atmospheric conditions—will have the effect of destroying the cohesion and buoyancy of the tiny particles of moisture in the air which go to produce fog, and precipitate them at once in the form of rain which completely clears the air and dies out when the fog-particles become exhausted—”

“Oh—I say! That's quite impossible, you know! Been discovered long before this, d'ye see, if there were anything in it! My word!”

“Does Your Lordship happen to know it's impossible? Ever seen or heard of its being tried out? Don't overlook the fact that I claim it must be exactly the right frequency for varying conditions. Who do you know who ever has tested this theory out? Would you swear it couldn't be done? Because if you do, I'll make your hair stand on end in a moment or two. Listen! Yesterday afternoon, we had thick fog in South Devon. I'd been working with a small directional transmitter, outdoors, against a wireless-transmitter in a plane overhead which was testing out a new direction-finder. When I projected fifty thousand kilocycles between the plane and the receiving-set in our concrete wireless-building, the plane-signals faded out entirely—couldn't be heard at all. When I switched off, they came in again clearly. My current was directed down the runway, off the edge of the cliff. In a couple of minutes, I noticed that it was raining like a summer shower along the runway—but nowhere else—fog as thick as ever on both sides. I swept the current from side to side as one sprinkles bullets from a machine-gun—precipitating heavy rain. In a few minutes I could see the end of the runway and the edge of the cliff, with blue sky way up overhead—and estimate that the fog was in a layer about two hundred feet thick on both sides. An hour later, a few wisps of fog had drifted back into the cut but something in the atmosphere kept them moving about until they became absorbed and disappeared—”

There was an explosive chorus of voices:

“Good Lord! If you can do that, you've prob'ly discovered a remedy for the very menace we've been discussin' all the evening—which you've not heard of yet! Aye! If those Belgian an' Luxembourg fogs were carryin' lethal gas—impregnated with it—destroy the fog an' you materially weaken or destroy the gas! By thunder, Harry! Of course we can't expect any such luck as a completely effectual defense against the disintegratin' ray an' this blasted deadly fog that we fancy is produced by human means—but if you only do as much as you say you've already accomplished, you'll certainly shake the confidence of those bounders in their diabolic inventions! They'll not start a war until they're a good bit more certain their chief weapon hasn't been inexplicably unloaded!”

THE newspaper-reading public will doubtless recall various press comments upon the London, Belgian and German fogs, with their high percentage of animal and human mortality during the months of November and December, 1930. There was no suggestion at the time that the phenomena were caused by anything but abnormal atmospheric conditions. Nobody knew at that time about the German development of the disintegrating ray or the terrific demonstration which was staged by two unidentified planes some miles from Moscow. Nothing definite is known about either the ray or the fog today—in fact, probably this is the first explanation in print of just what they were and the menace they most certainly would have been to every nation on the globe.

The measures which the Marquess and Earl Lammerford had taken to get advance information did not at first meet with any success. Fogs appeared unexpectedly at Mayence, Frankfort and Stuttgart—taking a heavier toll of life than any before. Yet, although reports came into the wireless intelligence bureau within ten minutes after they first appeared nobody heard any sound whatever like the drone of an airplane overhead. Aviators in the vicinity were notified by phone even more quickly—but heard nothing even they recognized as overhead craft, so none of them went up. Finally, however, at the little town of Ingolstadt on the Danube, one of the Marquess' agents happened to be looking at the glassy surface of the river when it was reflecting an unusually brilliant lot of stars. He chanced to see four heavy splashes in the water and, instantly glancing upward, also made out the shadowy form of a plane flying due east. Picking up a phone from a table near the window, he called the near-by flying-field and got a pilot, telling him what he had seen. In not over three minutes, Karl von Hofburgh was in the air, racing eastward; after which Joe Smalley sent his report to the wireless intelligence bureau and, adjusting his gas-mask, went cautiously down into the streets to render whatever assistance he could.

VON HOFBURGH'S subsequent report at four in the morning, from middle Hungary, stated that he had spotted and followed the mysterious plane until he forced it down—seeing three men jump from it with parachutes and disappear in a stretch of woods, the plane crashing in flames a few miles beyond, and not far from a village. As there was no chance to save it, he and his mechanic circled above it until a dozen villagers ran from some houses toward the blazing bus. They suddenly stopped, staggered, attempted to run back, fell upon the ground—and died within five hundred feet of the plane. Unquestionably, it had carried lethal gas, although nothing resembling a container was afterward found in the charred wreckage—nor anything by which the ship or the men might be identified. Von Hofburgh notified the Hungarian police that he had chased the plane from Ingolstadt in Bavaria, where it had been seen to drop something into the Danube and where a heavy fog had set in at the same time—but they simply laughed at the inference of any connection between the fog and the gas on the abandoned plane, nor did they even make a pretense of hunting for the fugitive crew.

This incident, however, cleared up any doubts in the minds of the Free Lances and the F. O. men as to what was causing the fogs. They *knew*, now—and figured it out as a mysterious offensive upon the part of the Reds against Germany. Upon that basis, they decided not to interfere—it would prove a wholesome curb upon the secret intentions of Berlin if the High Command got a pretty severe jolt of that sort at just that time. But an intercepted code-warning from Berlin to Moscow, picked up and decoded by the wireless intelligence bureau, forced them to consider earlier action than they had intended. Berlin was now definitely warning the Soviet that unless their original ultimatum were complied with at once, they would permit (they carefully avoided taking direct responsibility for the action as a Government measure) the destruction of everything within the Kremlin enclosure on Christmas Day (O. S.)—casually adding that nothing the Reds might have available in the way of defense would have the slightest effect upon the result.

Lord Ivonmore, when they showed him the decoded message, was of the opinion that Britain had no particular interest in the Kremlin—and that, anyhow, he fancied nothing could be done about it. Earl Lammerford, on the contrary, took the ground that the Kremlin, with its

art-treasures and centuries of historic interest was something belonging to the entire world—could be enjoyed again by persons of cultivation when the unscrupulous gang now in power had been succeeded by civilized government.

They decided to go down to Trevor Hall for a conference with Harry Archer that night. Things had been happening down on that Devon estate since Archer's return from Schenectady. Six different scientists—each with a big reputation in his own line before he consented to accept the Marquess' offer of a princely salary and opportunity to carry out his experiments in perfectly equipped laboratories cut from the solid rock a hundred feet below a great wooded tract—had been testing out certain experiments with amazing results, each of which supplied Archer with a partial solution of his problem.

At the conference that evening, Archer told the Trevors and their friends that he would be ready, with plane, equipment, and men, to make a Moscow flight on the specified day by the same route as that taken on their previous flight.

"You understand, Harry—if one of those planes does get above us—well—we're gone—that's all! They didn't catch a glimpse of us before—but this time you're deliberately goin' down after 'em. They'll do their damndest to direct that ray at us!"

"They don't dare project it above their generating-plane—Fred Starleigh overheard 'em admitting that. And they won't get *above* this bus I'm taking over! Just leave that to me. You fly the plane; I'll run the generator—increase or decrease the frequency, and direct the transmission. I'm reasonably sure of what's going to happen, Marquess, or I wouldn't attempt it. There is risk, of course—I'd be a fool not to admit that. I think Lord Ivonmore and the Senator should consider it before deciding to go with us, but I'm afraid there'll be no arguing with them."

AS upon the previous flight, they were over Moscow—circling too high to be noticed from below and the Marquess' muffler practically eliminating all noise—just before sunrise. And, as before, they heard the approaching German planes before they were actually in sight. Apparently the communists had no notion of risking the loss of their few remaining planes by an aerial attack, but they did commence a barrage from aircraft guns on the ground. As upon the previous occasion, one of the German planes remained pretty well up to protect the one doing the actual work of destruction. The moment the pilot of this one saw the Trevor plane swooping down upon him, he started his generator, aimed the electrode of his disintegrating ray just below the horizontal, and tried to get above them. The Marquess was imperturbably attending strictly to flying the plane according to Archer's previous instructions of just about the position he wanted to be in. Ivonmore and Senator Branton stood at the cabin windows with the Marchioness, Earl Lammerford and Prince Abdool, watching the approaching battle tensely. Inside of the next three minutes they would be either non-existent or witnesses of a spectacular occurrence which they'd never forget. Archer was controlling the directional electrode just outside his window with a thick glass lever—gauging to a nicety his exact margin of safety from the other plane and the angle in relation to it.

"We're a good bit faster, Marquess—keep her as she is! Now—watch 'em!"

The plane below them swerved violently over onto its left wing—couldn't seem to level out. Archer increased his frequency until it touched eighty thousand. Instantly

—so quickly that they couldn't see just what happened—there was nothing but a spreading cloud of black dust in mid-air, and small hurtling black fragments.

"Got him—by Jove! *Got him!* Now watch the other one!"

The lower plane had started its work of destruction where the southerly wall of the Kremlin enclosure comes down to the river—had momentarily made of the river a muddy ditch under a cloud of steam, when the Marquess dived down after it. Keeping his frequency upon exactly the mark where it was when the other plane disappeared, Archer pointed his electrode directly at the nose of the other craft and presently shot underneath at a sharp angle. Like its companion, there was first a violent swerve—then a cloud of black dust.

"My problem was that of short-circuiting his ray—making the force of his current back up and accumulate as it would in a condenser until the tension let go inside of his cabin," Archer explained. "There was neither chance nor hope for my doing anything else—but I knew that with the power he must be using, in a highly amplified form, just the one 'short' was all I needed. Candidly, I fancy we were lucky! I knew what I'd succeeded in doing with other sorts of rays, but didn't know the first damned thing about this one. Now—if there just happens to be a fog in Berlin—"

THERE was a fog in Berlin—unheralded—unseen until too late to do anything; nearly a thousand persons died of it. Then, fortunately, the Moscow lot became cocky and tried an ultimatum on their own. They announced that there would be fog in Hamburg on a certain specified day—which was where they lost all they'd gained with their carefully built-up mystery. Six big Trevor planes were flying over Hamburg at the specified moment. The fog began rolling up from the river at two in the morning—but the planes dropping the containers suddenly got out of control and pitched into the water. Then the fog seemed to be cut into thin wisps which hadn't strength enough to spread through the city. Crews of vessels lying along the docks reported the presence of lethal gas on the river—apparently drowned out by a patter of rain-drops, although the sky was clear overhead.

Archer said, later: "We've not yet reached the point where we would make much impression upon a Newfoundland Banks fog. Ten planes, flying abreast, might cut a lane through fog along the airways and possibly keep it fairly clear—but that's still to be tested out—we don't know, as yet. But we're certainly on the right track, I fancy."

"Just where did you first get the idea of eliminating that horrible disintegrating ray of the Germans, Harry? Where did you start in on the right line of investigation?"

"Fishing for D-X, one night—with my super-het, screen-grid, wireless set—an improved one, built for me last summer in Schenectady. Every radio-listener finds out very soon that a low-powered station between him and the D-X station he's trying to get, no matter how powerful the farther one may be, will completely block the distant one. Stations within twenty kilocycles of the D-X one's channel will slop over on it with the edges of their wave-banks and pinch him out. And one soon understands what is meant by radio-interference. It suddenly struck my mind that sufficiently powerful interference between the generator of any ray and whatever it was directed at—in other words, in its dielectric field—would not only blanket it but in some cases short-circuit it if the ray happened to be directional along one channel only. That's the simple principle of the whole proposition."

The Iron Man in the Mask



An exciting story of baseball and another great game, by the able writing-man who gave us "Piece—Forward!"

By **KINGSLEY
MOSES**

Illustrated by George Avison

BRACED for the shock of collision, old Trap Morrison set himself.

The long hop of Dan Hawker's fast throw from deep right field would come in a full six feet to the left of the plate, the catcher saw as he moved out along the baseline to snare it. Subconsciously old Trap was wondering just where Bill Brennan's spikes would get him. Brennan was not the lad to let any catcher block his way.

As a matter of fact the spikes struck just a wisp of a second before the ball settled into the catcher's mitt. Both big men, at the smashing concussion, went sprawling down together as the dun, dry dust of the diamond spurted up to cover them. For an instant base-runner, catcher and the blue serge figure of the stooping umpire, Owl Earllham, were lost to the sight of the stands. Then Owl's head and shoulders emerged; and his right thumb pointed high and backward.

"Ye're out!" the husky roar rolled across the field.

Up came the stands triumphantly. The tying run had once more been blocked off by old Steel-trap Morrison.

"Try to get by 'at baby!" shrieked an elegantly dressed gentleman in the Mayor's field box between home and third.

"Can't be done," bellowed His Honor. "—Aw, the bum!"

For the umpire's hand had suddenly descended and both palms were spread flat above the prostrate figures in the dust of the base line. "Ye're safe!" Owl Earllham reversed himself.

But there wasn't any doubt about the justice of that swiftly changed decision; for there was the ball, a full yard away, trickling off into foul ground. Trap Morrison had muffed a throw for once.

The bleachers hurled hats and pop-bottles and programs in futile rage. The grandstand spectators, nearer by, who could see just what had happened, cursed and groaned.

The Illinois Eagles, Wild Bill's accomplices, came tumbling out of their dug-out, waving caps and baseball bats in exultation. Wild Bill pushed himself up on hands and knees, dusting off his gray trousers, got to his feet just a little unsteadily—for he hadn't all his wind left—and started for the visitors' bench.

Instinctively Trap Morrison rolled over and recovered the ball which had so disastrously eluded him. The big, square-jawed catcher heaved himself up on one knee; then stumbled as he tried to rise. Even from the field boxes you could see that his trouser leg was slit and smeared with blood already where the spikes had sliced into knee and thigh.

But, with the ball in his hand, Trap did rise, though at his first step the left leg buckled and he almost went down again. He didn't quite fall. But, face twisted with pain, he curled his left knee clear of the ground and went hopping amazingly forward on his right leg only.

Wild Bill was halfway to his own bench when Trap thumped him between the shoulders with the ball—not gently.

In astonished silence the grandstand watched.

"Ye're out!" announced Owl Earllham.

Wild Bill whirled with a snarl. "I'm *whut*?"

"Out," the umpire told him. "Ye never touched the home plate."

In their half of the ninth, Trap Morrison's Clam-diggers put over the winning run. But the crowd went home talking about nothing but that extraordinary triple decision; the Illinois Eagles crabbed and threatened to protest the game; and a few Illinois sympathizers wanted to take a poke at Owl Earllham: and yet everyone had to agree, after calmer consideration, that at every step the umpire had been right—a bit hasty, perhaps, but correct in every one of his three decisions.

That did not heal Trap's badly injured knee, however. Southie Slade, the kid pitcher, got one arm about the crippled man.

And Mayor Murchison himself had vaulted quickly over the rail of his box to help his old friend and schoolmate.

"You'll be fit as a fiddle tomorrow," the Mayor encouraged—even while, glimpsing the trickling blood which streaked down from the catcher's bare knee-cap, he knew that he was lying. If Trap had been only a kid now, with all a kid's marvelous powers of recuperation—but Trap Morrison was forty-two years old.

Dan Hawker came much closer to the truth that evening, sitting on the porch of the Slades' bungalow out Oak Hill way. "At his age they don't ever get over a torn knee-cap," the heavy-hitting star of the Clam-diggers pronounced. "Old Trap is through—in the big league anyway."

From the dark of a leafy screen which cut off the lights from the crescent drive, Lydia Slade said: "Oh, no! That would be too cruel for Tom!"

And her brother, universally known as Southie, lamented: "Well, who's goin' to catch me if they have to let Trap go?"

"There've been other catchers before Trap," Dan Hawker told the kid left-hander. "And there'll be others after him."

"But not any that can handle me like Trap does. He pulls in all the wild ones."

"Stop slinging 'em wild," Hawker suggested sensibly. "Now run on down to the corner, kid, and shoot some pool with your drug-store cowboy buddies. I want to talk to Lydia."

He talked to Lydia. And Lydia gave him the same old answer. For all his good looks and sparkling reputation as a ball-player Hawker just couldn't make the grade with Lydia Slade somehow. Tonight it made him a little angry. "If I was a rocky old wreck like Trap Morrison, now," he grumbled, "I could understand better. But as it is— I got money, plenty. And I'm good for ten more years in the big show. When we're on the road you could keep an eye on the kid." He was shrewd enough to know that this was his best argument.

Lydia liked Dan Hawker, as almost everybody did. But she didn't love him. She was one of those tall, rather big-boned girls, with steady, dark gray eyes and smooth shiny hair that was neither quite brown nor quite golden—not the kind of girl you take to cabarets at night, but the kind you marry and stay home with.

She laughed now, gently, not trying to disengage her hand from Dan Hawker's. "Dan," she said, "I suppose it's just because you're too successful. I'm the kind of a fool woman, I guess, who has to be a little sorry for a person before—well, I could feel like marrying them."

"What you want me to do? Go out and get hit by a truck?"

She drew her hand away then, and sat rocking quietly; a long, white, graceful figure in the gloom. "Loving a person is a queer thing, Dan," she reflected aloud. "It doesn't seem to make sense sometimes."

"I'll say it don't!" agreed the star outfielder. He hunched his wide shoulders. "Well, see you back of first base tomorrow."

"I hope you hit a thousand."

"Why shouldn't I?" Waving his Panama he stepped off the stoop and swung into his roadster.

The Sunday papers which announced that Trap Morrison's torn ligaments and chipped knee-cap would probably

keep him out of the game for the rest of the season brought dismay to every follower of the Clam-diggers. Trap batted only in the vicinity of .275; but it was his knowledge and experience and particularly his ability to handle young pitchers which held the team together. Sea-



The Eagle slugger, slashing sharply, cut the pitch straight over the third bag for an easy single.

son after season, hot or cold, bright or cloudy, Trap had been in there behind the plate telling the kids what to send up. Last year he had equaled Muddy Ruel's astonishing record of catching one hundred and forty-nine games. The Iron Man in the Mask, the boys in the press-coop called him.

Young Southie, out at the Slades' pleasant little home, actually paled at the news and lost appetite for his corned-beef hash and poached eggs. He hadn't thought last night that they really would let Trap go. But now the way it looked—

"It's only him that gets me by at all," the kid pitcher lamented to his sister. "I got plenty of smoke, all right; and I can put 'em where I want—if Trap tells me."

Lydia, unlike most sisters, didn't seize the opportunity to lace into her brother: tell him to brace up and stiffen his spine and be a man, and all the rest of it. She didn't know, nor give a hoot, about modern so-called psychology; but she was aware that you can't buck up a timid soul by berating it.

"You won one game Jonassen caught for you," she reminded him comfortingly. The relief catcher was a fine backstop and something of a slugger, if mentally not so bright.

Southie nodded; but his gloom did not lighten.

"But it's with old Trap back there that I feel confident. You gotta feel that way, Sis, to pitch winnin' ball, you know."

"Well, I'll talk about it with Trap himself." She rose in crisp, primrose-pink linen with a pleated white collar,

and pulled on buckskin driving-gloves. "I'm going to ride him around in the country for an hour or so. He won't be able to work his clutch-pedal now for a while."

Southie silently approved. Dan Hawker was a great guy, all right; and Trap might be pretty old for Sis—fifteen years' difference. But Trap was the fella you could tie to. Southie went down to the pool-room—sur-reptitiously open at the rear—and shot ten games of Kelly. But whenever he thought of baseball, he was unhappy. The veteran slab-men, Stern and Simpson, were aging and losing their stuff; Rell had a bad arm; Tex Tyson, the other kid twirler, liked his beer too much—and always needed Trap's steadyng, too.

"You look like you lost yer marbles, kid," Looie Liebmann said, slicing the eight ball into the side pocket.

IT turned out worse than that. The Clam-diggers lost seven of their first eight games on the road and saw their comfortable lead vanish like the froth off a seidel. Dan Hawker wrote Lydia Slade about it a couple of times, and blamed everybody but himself and Southie—Southie hadn't pitched a single game, by the way, at his own request.

Trap had merely nodded when Lydia told him of Hawker's intelligence reports. And then he also merely nodded when Lydia came for the morning drive—a daily event now—and brought peculiar news with her.

"I got this in this morning's mail from St. Louis, Trap," she said, holding out a slip of paper. "Put in the wrong envelope, evidently. But what does it mean?"

"This" was a thirty-day note, signed by Timothy Poltz, and promising to pay Dan Hawker three thousand dollars at six per cent interest. And Timothy Poltz was the manager of the Clam-diggers.

"What does it mean?" It was still warm September, and the girl had pulled up at the side of a country road beneath lacing elm branches which let glints of sunshine shift across her golden-brown hair. Trap loved her more than ever that morning. And here, miraculously, was an opportunity to prove to her something. . . . He twisted to pull out his tobacco-pouch, though, and filled his pipe before he answered. And by that time he had determined to answer only: "I guess it just means that Tim had to borrow from Hawker."

Lydia knew better than that. She had not grown up in the baseball world without a glimpse or two of its darker lanes and bypaths. The ball-player is an all-too-human young man. She resented Trap's refusal to take her into his confidence.

"Dan Hawker writes to me every two or three days," she said. "He was sending this note to some one else—for safekeeping, I suppose. And he got the envelopes mixed. It happens. But why, Trap, shouldn't he have kept this note in his own wallet?"

But all that Trap would say was: "None of my business, Lydia. Let's roll. . . ."

Yet Trap wasn't at all surprised when, early in October on the evening when the team was expected home for the last two games of the season, a deputation from the club was announced.

Mayor Murchison and the two other majority owners came directly to the point.

"We want you to manage the team, Morrison."

"For two games?" He sat on the bed beside the Mayor and gave his two hotel-room chairs to the others.

They replied that this also meant a

contract for manager for next year. They had already found out about Tim Poltz and had let him out. The man had steadily been going wrong—getting deeper and deeper into debt every month, and borrowing wherever might be.

And Dan Hawker had to go too. His usurious practice of lending money at about six hundred per cent had not been confined to Poltz alone. Half a dozen of the Clam-diggers had been borrowing against next month's paycheck—all from Hawker.

"No. If I'm to manage, I'll have to keep Dan," Trap made that point firmly.

They battled over that for an hour. The owners pointed out with a good deal of justice that if any word of Hawker's usuries leaked out, and the Diggers then lost the pennant, the baseball world would then scent another 1919 Blacksox scandal. Better to make a clean sweep of it and send Dan along with his dupe.

But Trap sat tight on that particular point. He claimed he had job enough on his hands to reenergize a disorganized team without letting out his heavy hitter as well. That was the issue he made, though it wasn't the issue he was truly thinking about. In the end they let him keep Hawker.

"But if we lose the pennant, and then Poltz turns ugly and squeals—well, we'd all better get out of baseball," Mayor Murchison expressed himself uneasily.

"Poltz won't squeal. And maybe we won't lose the pennant," Trap said. He expected to see Dan Hawker just as quickly as a taxi could get the man up from South Station. So he set about finding Poltz—who had left the team before the last game of the trip was through.

SURE enough, at eleven-thirty Hawker did appear. "You dirty squealer!" was his pleasant greeting. "Stand up, and I'll knock your block off."

"No," Trap told him, and deliberately sat down. "And what gave you the idea I was a squealer?"

"My brother in Michigan gets a letter I wrote to Lydia Slade." The outfielder was poised in front of Trap, shoulders hunched forward, hairy fists swinging at the end of his long arms. "So she must've got the note Poltz give me. And she shows it to you—you—"

"Tie that a minute. You're right so far. But what makes you think I squealed?"

"So's you get to manage the team. And let me and Poltz out. And queer me with Lydia."

"You're only right once out of five times. That, talkin' baseball averages, is two hundred per cent—about what you've been hitting the last dozen games." Trap filled his pipe and lighted it peacefully enough. "The one time you connected was when you said that Poltz was getting out. Check that. But I didn't show Poltz's note to Murchison; and I didn't make a bid to manage the team. And how you stand with Lydia is 'tween you and her."

He reached out for the telephone and took off the receiver. But before he spoke into the diaphragm, he finished: "And I'm keeping you on the team, if—Yeah," he broke off to the operator, "ask Mr. Poltz to step up now."

Lender and debtor glared at each other in utter astonishment. Neither cared anything at all about seeing the other; but neither knew just what to say.

So Trap broke the sullen silence with: "I've got something belonging to one of you. I don't know yet which. But that's what I aim to find out right now."

He pulled the note, which had been



missent to Lydia, from his pocket. "This reads for three thousand dollars at six per cent per annum." He squinted at it. "And it's dated—hum—just three weeks ago." He figured on the telephone pad.

"It's mine. Gimme!" Hawker demanded.

"Pretty quick. But let's give Poltz a chance to speak up first." He turned to the ex-manager. "Tim, you write Hawker a check for two thousand and seven dollars and fifty cents, and we'll tear up the note and call things square."

Poltz could say no more than: "Huh?"

But Hawker exploded: "Two thousand and—"

"Yeah. That's the cash money you lent Poltz. The extra thousand was your bonus for lending it. That sort o' thing's been done before. What you've really got comin' to you, Hawker, is your two thousand, plus interest at six per cent—for three weeks. Seven-fifty."

"You can't prove it!" The thrifty outfielder was just as much worried as angry now, however.

"I don't have to. But you would just as soon stay with the Clam-diggers, wouldn't you, Hawker? And I'd just as soon fix it so that Poltz has to keep his trap shut. See?

"If he ever squawks," the new manager calmly ran on, "about what's happened on the team—well, I'll give you back the note, Hawker, and let you try to collect the whole sum. If not, we'll all forget it."

"It's a hold-up!" moaned the athletic *Shylock*.

"Sure," Trap grinned. "There's pen and ink on the table, Poltz. Two thousand and seven-fifty."

"But he don't get the note back till I find out is the check good?" the outfielder made his last stab at high finance.

"Not even then. The note—for a couple of years, anyway—stays in escrow."

"Escrow—what's that?"

"That's Latin," Trap told him, "for 'my pants pocket.'"

The newspapers didn't get the information as to the change in management until the next morning. But the sensation could not have packed the park fuller than it was anyway, for only by winning both games had the Clam-diggers a chance for the pennant. Through bad weather they had missed a scheduled game which could not be made up, so that even if the Eagles took one contest and the Diggers the other, the final count of victories would still put the visitors ahead.

Trap stuck to his dug-out during all the preliminaries of batting practice, resolutely refusing to show himself to the clamoring fans. His whole mind, he thought, was centered on baseball today. Yet he did find himself wondering what sort of tale Dan Hawker was telling to the pretty Lydia out there in the box. The dashing star of the Diggers lounged in confidential conversation, one elbow on the railing of the field box, his lips moving steadily. And Lydia, lovely in her unfeigned tensivity of interest, was obviously listening intently.

"It's up to her," was the older man's grim, unspoken summary. The club's dirty linen was officially Trap's own business now. He didn't intend washing it even before a public limited to Lydia.



"It's a hold-up!" moaned the *Shylock*. "Sure," Trap grinned. "Two thousand and seven-fifty."

Stern, the club's oldest but still most reliable pitcher went to the mound—Jonassen catching. It was a pretty battle. The weather was warm for the season; and Stern was showing all his old stuff. Five innings went by without a single tally.

Then, in their half of the sixth, the Eagle lead-off man smacked a lucky homer into the left-field bleachers.

That wasn't any reason to pull Stern, though, Trap reasoned correctly.

For in the last half of the sixth, the Diggers put on a carnival. Man after man hit the ball hard on a line. Five runs came parading over the plate then; and the bags were still loaded with white-clad home players when Dan Hawker stepped confidently to the rubber—and hit into a double play.

Still with a five-to-one score to work on, there didn't seem to be anything to worry about. Through the seventh, Stern kept on showing his old stuff, pitching with ease and skill, taking his time—an intolerable amount of time, as a matter of fact. The umpires began hectoring him about it.

"Say, he drives a feller nuts fiddle-faddlin' away!" muttered young Jonassen, buckling on his pads for the beginning of the eighth inning.

"He throws 'em: you stop 'em!" Trap growled timely warning.

But the kid catcher had been speaking from the heart. When the first Eagle got on base, Jonassen over-reached himself in his eagerness. He tried to throw to catch the base-stealer a fraction of a second before he really had the ball in his catcher's mitt. There was a lot of scrambling around the batter's box before the ball was actually retrieved. Then the sack-thieving Eagle was perched on the third-base bag. Stern passed the batter.

And the next man up hit hard down the third-base line. Stopping the runner from getting home, the Diggers' third baseman missed the play at the other two bags: Nobody down, and the bases loaded.

"Southie," said Trap, on the bench, "get in there."

The kid pitcher went white with amazement. He had

not pitched a game for two weeks. And here he was being tossed into the toughest crisis of the year.

"I can't—" he began.

"Get goin'."

The stands were as surprised as young Southie Slade himself. Only one huge voice bellowed: "Sell out!" Then a murmur of growling and swearing ran around the tiers of concrete. Two or three of the yellow afternoon papers had hinted—

Trap Morrison actually surprised himself by looking over at Lydia. He saw her gloved hands gripped hard on the rail; and her face was white.

RAPIDLY as thoughts run in such an emergency, the new manager sensed what was in the girl's mind. She thought he was using her kid brother to bear the blame for a defeat which now appeared almost inevitable. Well, that did look like the right of it, didn't it! But all the manager said, as he stumped out of the dug-out a pace or two with Southie was: "Keep 'em close in—and low."

The youngster actually did that. Swinging with an excess of ambition, the next Eagle fanned out infamously. The stands were still too tense for more than a sigh of relief.

Southie worked fast and smoothly. The count on the batter was two and two. Then a ball dropped slightly and came waist-high.

The Eagles' bat met it.

Everybody moved at once. But the ball whizzed sharply between second and third and went sizzling out toward the right-field wall.

Dan Hawker came plunging in to scoop it and save all the runs except the sure tally from third. And Hawker, the ball-hawk, over-ran the play—bumped the ball, fumbled.

One Eagle scored—another. And the ball was coming in wide. Yet Jonassen, at that, had time to make the play. Jonassen muffed it.

Suddenly the Clam-diggers had only one run lead left. Five to four: a man on third, and only one out.

Trap Morrison limped out onto the diamond. But no one but the umpire he spoke to ever knew what he said, for the angry roar of the stands deafened even the players who milled frantically about the infield.

Hawker, in right field, had slung his glove to the turf and was leaping on it crazily. Southie Slade was actually spinning round and round, so upset and excited that he wasn't really sure whether he ought to be cursing out the fielder who had let him down, or the catcher who had completed the slaughter. And the boy evidently finally chose to vent his hysterics on Trap, as the manager approached him. Whatever he said was lost in the hullabaloo; but his gestures were highly expressive. Then his trembling, accusing finger dropped. He stood staring at his older mentor.

For Trap was hobbling back to the dug-out. And there, out in front of it, where all might observe, the crippled man was buckling on chest-protector and shin-pads.

"Morrison catchin' fer Jonassen!" the loud-speaker boomed.

"He's crazy!" was the general comment. "Or crooked!"

Trap proved he wasn't either of those things. Babying his pitcher along, the veteran got the two last men of the Eagles' list retired without another tally. It was still five to four for the home team when it came to the visitors' last session. . . .

Here was the break of the ball-game. After their one explosion in the sixth inning, the Clam-diggers had reverted to their recent hitless habits, while the Eagles were soaring and confident. With one run to tie up the game,

or two runs to put the visitors ahead, it wasn't likely that the home team could come through with a marker in their half of the final inning. With a rattled kid left-hander on the mound and a rickety cripple behind the bat, what chance was there against the sluggers?

Yet Southie, with Trap calling every pitch for him, kept steadily at work. He was almost as deliberate as the veteran Stern had been.

The first Eagle lined out to short-stop. Big Brennan, who had lamed Trap, came grinning up to the rubber.

"Here goes your ol' ball-game, Iron Man." He whacked his bat three times on the pentagon.

"Be sure to run on third strike, Bill," the catcher came back at him. "Sometimes I drop the ball."

"Third strike—me eye!" Brennan got a good toe-hold.

He guessed it right, too, that time. Southie tried to slip in a fast one. And the Eagle slugger, slashing sharply, cut the pitch straight over the third-base bag for an easy single.

Then Walters sent one of those cheap sacrifices to deep left. Brennan got to second before the throw-in, all right; but the Clam-diggers' rooters were roaring. Only one more man to dispose of: then the game would be ended.

Tall and heavy, the Eagles' first baseman, Van Popper, was a nice man to have in there in a pinch, though. The fellow was a reliable and steady hitter of the old Jacques Fournier type. Almost always he came through when he was needed; and he stood third in the league in home runs.

Old Trap knew the value of deliberation now—and again the wise catcher-manager called his young ally into a protracted conference. There were hoots and jeers from the stands, though the bulk of the black, massed mob was nervously silent.

At the plate Van Popper fidgeted.

So the first pitched ball beat him cleanly. It whizzed right past his chest, and he never got his bat from his shoulder till the ball thumped into the mitt.

"Stuh-ri-ke!" called the umpire behind the bat—then stepped back abruptly.

For Trap had almost stumbled into him in an effort to throw to third.

Too late! The bad knee stiffened and made the throw clumsy. Bill Brennan went sliding into third base well ahead of the ball—one good base perfectly pilfered.

SOUTHIE went up in the air then. Not all Trap's coaching sufficed. Four balls, one after the other, whirled through the air in every direction except across the plate. Van Popper's comments were picturesque. He had wanted to hit his homer. But hardly with the length of a hockey stick could he have touched any of Southie's eccentric offerings.

Suggs, the solid man, stepped to bat. Suggs, too, was a .350 hitter, but dead slow. But he didn't need to be fast in this emergency. For Van Popper ambled down to second on the first pitched ball—with Trap not daring to chance missing him and thus letting Brennan come home.

One hit now, and two runs easily. Almost surely enough to win the ball game. That cruel, monotonous thumping of feet commenced in the stands: "Take 'im out! Take 'im out!" they were moaning.

And poor young Southie kept twitching his head over his shoulder to see where Van Popper was.

Trap stopped the game again. Visibly limping in pain, he went out to tell the youngster to play only the batter. Then Trap went back to the plate and set himself.

Yet once more Southie twisted around.

Trap yelled. Too late! Like a lance, Brennan came, stealing home.

Southie hadn't a chance to get him by a low throw direct to the plate. But Southie slung wild, anyway.

Trap heaved himself to pull in the ball from his own left. But he never got hands on it, for it just grazed Suggs' shoulder and went



caroming off toward the stands as Brennan slid in to safety.

Tie game? Visiting rooters went wild. Derbies, caps and score-cards rocketed out onto the diamond. But instantly it was the home crowd's turn.

For the umpire at the plate, ruling rightly, had pointed out that the ball had hit the batter before the steal home was scored. The ball, at that moment, then, became dead. No play could be counted.

That was all. Suggs walked, of course. But Anderson, with bases still full, and Brennan still glowering on third base, fouled right straight up into the waiting catcher's mitt. . . .

Trap again had been invited to supper at the Slades' that night. He found Lydia alone in the kitchen, with a minute lace apron over a house-dress of crimson and buttercup yellow. Against the prosaic background of range and sink, she was all the more glowing.

"I promised to go to a movie with Dan Hawker this evening." She gave Trap both her hands. "But I guess I'd rather stay home and talk to you. You pulled Southie through today. And that lucky wild pitch—"

Southie barged in at that instant. He was still all hopped up over the successful outcome of the game. He had collected all the evening papers.

"But they don't give me very much credit." The boy spread the scare-heads on the stationary washtubs. Then he blurted out the question: "Who'll you be pitchin' tomorrow, Trap? That'll be the show-down."

"Why, I'm using you, son," Trap told him amazingly.

Even Lydia exclaimed at that. "Not Southie!"

"Sure!" Trap kept his face perfectly straight. "After showing how he could use his head today—why, there isn't another pitcher in the big league would've pulled himself out of a hole that way. Hitting the batter was the only way he could stop that sure steal home—the only way, I'm tellin' you!"

"But Southie didn't—oh—oh—" Lydia flinched as with calm and deliberate brutality her guest planted a heavy foot upon her soft suede slipper.

Callously Trap ran on: "Now, that's what brains do for a pitcher. Southie always had the smoke; but he didn't always use the old think-tank. But now"—a hand on the boy's shoulder—"you've showed you can really out-smart 'em, you'll have 'em eating out of your hand tomorrow."



The new manager sensed what was in the girl's mind. She thought he was using her kid brother to bear the blame for a defeat.

Southie said, as he visibly swelled: "Why—why, sure, Trap. I guess I got as much stuff as any of 'em!"

"And brains too, boy. Don't forget it."

By morning Southie really believed it. And that day he pitched unbeatable ball. The Eagles got one earned run. With the battery Morrison and Slade, Trap's team annexed the pennant.

WHEN the roars and rejoicings were done, and Trap had painfully dressed himself and hobbled out with an old bat for a cane, he found Lydia Slade waiting, sitting in her coupé by the clubhouse exit.

"I'm taking you home for supper again," she insisted; "otherwise you'll be up all night with reporters and what-not."

"I can stand eating supper with you—right often." He pulled himself—with an acute wrench of pain—into the seat beside her.

They were all the way out by the reservoir before, halted at a crossing light, she said thoughtfully: "I've always wondered how I could manage Southie if he ever got really successful. But I don't have to bother now, Trap. You've showed you can manage him."

"Could you see,"—Trap's hand closed over hers on the wheel—"could you see your way to helping me with the job, Lydia?"

She looked at him, her eyes deep and serious and gentle. Then she smiled. "Long contract, Trap?"

"For life, dear. Will you sign it?"

A cop bawled: "Think ye're at a funeral? Oh, pardon me, Trap. I didn' make yuh!"

The coupé rolled over the crossing, as honking cars hustled them from behind.

But the girl said, as she flashed a quick smile: "I always did hate a hold-out."

TARZAN

Guard of the Jungle

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

The Story So Far:

TARZAN was disturbed—for into the very heart of his own domain there had come a party of communists bent upon looting the treasure-vaults of Opar of their fabled gold, and using this wealth in conquering the world for the communist cause. But the Russian leader of the party, one Peter Zveri, secretly planned to betray his comrades and make himself emperor of Africa, with his beautiful secretary Zora Drinov as his empress.

Tarzan, listening from the trees above the base camp, had learned of the communist plans, and journeyed to Opar to warn the inhabitants, but was taken off-guard and imprisoned. By chance, he discovered as a fellow-prisoner the high priestess La, who had been dethroned in a conspiracy among her people. Tarzan escaped from Opar, taking La with him; but while he was hunting for food in the jungle they became separated and during La's attempts to find him she came upon the base camp of the communists. Zveri had departed with his comrades in a second attempt upon Opar, leaving in charge of the camp the Sheik Abu Batu and his Aarab followers, another division of the motley groups which formed Zveri's party. Zora Drinov had remained with these. She welcomed the weary La, and the two girls became friends. They were in unsafe hands, however, for the treacherous Sheik deserted camp after looting it of everything valuable, bound the girls and took them along to sell as slaves. Meanwhile Zveri's second foray upon Opar failed as had the first, though there was left captive Wayne Colt, the wealthy young American member of the party. A little Oparian priestess, Nao, released Colt, however, and he started through the jungle to regain the camp.

Among the Aarabs fleeing with their captives, dissension had arisen. One of the young men, desiring to obtain La for himself, separated the two girls by a ruse. But La killed him with his own knife, and escaped into the jungle where she came upon Jad-bal-ja, a lion who had once attached himself to Tarzan. The lion recognized her as a friend of his master and became her bodyguard. Zora, after La had gone, tried to escape from her captors, and her ensuing struggle with Abu Batu was luckily witnessed by Colt, who leaped upon the Sheik and killed him. After Colt and Zora had evaded pursuit by the rest of the Aarabs, Colt told her of Zveri's second failure at Opar, and that the communist party was now reduced to Zveri, two other Russians,—Michael Dorsky and Paul Ivitch,—a Mexican named Miguel Romero, and Colt's little Filipino friend Antonio Mori, besides Kitembo, an African chieftain—who was acting as guide—and his black Galla warriors and camp-boys.

The greatest adventure of America's premier fiction hero comes to its climax in this fascinating installment.

Zora and Colt, drawn together by their common plight, felt a deep though unspoken understanding begin to grow between them. But their ignorance of the jungle

made the obtaining of food very difficult; they were both weakened and half-starved when one day while Colt was away hunting Zora was carried off by a great ape. Colt, finding her gone, began a frantic search. He had fallen exhausted when he was discovered by La, who gave him food and water, and conversing in the halting English she had learned from Zora, found he was a friend of the Russian girl's.

Zveri, who had returned to the site of his base camp and found it deserted, dared not leave to search for Zora until the reinforcements and fresh supplies he had ordered should arrive. While he was awaiting these, a black runner brought him a message which disturbed him greatly, but which he showed to none of his comrades.

Zora Drinov, unconscious from terror, was being carried deep into the jungle, when Tarzan suddenly confronted the great ape. They prepared to battle for her, but To-yat the ape, hearing the approach of the mighty elephant Tantor, dropped the girl and fled. Tarzan bore her gently away to a secluded glade where he nursed her back to health and strength, though he refused to reply to her queries—or indeed to speak to her at all.

When the girl had fully recovered, Tarzan took her in his arms and leaping into a tree carried her thus, to her amazement, a long way through the jungle to a spot within sight of Zveri's camp, where he lowered her to the ground and released her, following in the trees to insure her safety. Near the camp, Paul Ivitch, seeing something move in a tree, lifted his gun and fired. Tarzan of the Apes fell unconscious to the ground, blood running from a wound in the side of his head. One of the blacks identified him as the Lord of the Jungle and Zveri, knowing Tarzan to be an enemy, was about to dispatch him forthwith, when Zora frenziedly intervened. At her frantic pleas, Zveri promised to spare the jungle lord—but next morning when the expedition started on a five-hundred-mile march toward Italian Somaliland, there to foment trouble, the treacherous Russian insisted upon Zora's accompanying him, while secretly he instructed Dorsky to remain behind and kill Tarzan as soon as the party was well away.

This Dorsky was about to do when Tarzan who, had recovered consciousness but was still bound, sent out a penetrating call for Tantor. In a fury the elephant trampled Dorsky to death; then he carried Tarzan to a glade hidden deep in the jungle. But while Tantor went



Tarzan touched her shoulder in a half-caress. "La the immutable!" he murmured.

to the river for water, Tarzan was menaced by Dango the hyena and would have been slain had it not been for the sharp teeth of Nkima, Tarzan's messenger-monkey, who, far away in the jungle, heard his beloved master's call for help and swung hastily to his side.

During this time Wayne Colt, weakened by the privations he had endured, had fallen ill of fever and was being skillfully nursed by La, while the great golden lion shared with them the kills he made.

When Tarzan had fully recovered from the head-wound made by the glancing bullet from Ivitch's gun, he visited the base camp of the conspirators where he retrieved his rope and hunting-knife and obtained a bow and arrows from the shelters of the blacks, who fled at sight of him. He then overtook Zveri's expedition and after listening from the trees to the discussion of their plans, and frightening a sentry by a well-aimed arrow, he swung on to join his Waziri warriors who, under their chief, Muviro, were marching to a rendezvous with the ape-man in response to a command carried to the chief by that erratic messenger, little Nkima. These stalwart black fighters greeted the lord of the jungle with joy and grouped eagerly about him as he said:

"We shall wait here for the strangers—and tonight you shall listen to Tarzan while he explains the plans you must follow." (*The story continues in detail:*)

AS Zveri's column took up the march upon the following morning, after a night of rest that had passed without incident, the spirits of all had risen to an appreciable degree. The blacks had not forgotten the grim warning that had sped out of the night surrounding their previous camp, but they were of a race whose spirits soon rebound from depression.

The leaders of the expedition now were encouraged, for over a third of the distance to their goal had been covered.

For various reasons they were anxious to complete this phase of the plan. Zveri believed that upon its successful conclusion hinged his whole dream of empire. Ivitch, a natural-born trouble-maker, was happy in the thought that the success of the expedition would cause untold annoyance to millions of people and perhaps, also, by the dream of his return to Russia as a hero.

Romero and Mori wanted to have it over for entirely different reasons. They were thoroughly disgusted with the Russian. They had lost all confidence in the sincerity of Zveri, who, filled as he was with his own importance and his delusions of future grandeur, talked too much, with the result that he had convinced Romero that he and all his kind were frauds, bent upon accomplishing their selfish ends with the assistance of their silly dupes and at the expense of the peace and prosperity of the world.

It had not been difficult for Romero to convince Mori of the truth of his deductions and now, thoroughly disillusioned, the two men continued on with the expedition because they believed that they could not successfully accomplish their intended desertion until the party was once more settled in the base camp.

The march had continued uninterruptedly for about an hour after camp had been broken when one of Kitembo's black scouts, leading the column, halted suddenly in his tracks.

"Look!" he said to Kitembo, who was just behind him.

The chief stepped to the warrior's side and there, before him in the trail, sticking upright in the earth, was an arrow.

"It is a warning!" said the warrior.

Gingerly, Kitembo plucked the arrow from the earth and examined it. He would have been very glad to keep the knowledge of his discovery to himself, although not a little shaken by what he had seen, but the warrior at his side had seen, too. "It is the same," he said. "It is



"Cut that!" snapped Romero. "I have you covered and if it wasn't for Senorita Drinov I would kill you on the spot!"

another of the arrows that were left behind in the base camp."

When Zveri came abreast of them, Kitembo handed him the arrow. "It is the same," he said to the Russian, "and it is a warning for us to turn back."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Zveri contemptuously. "It is only an arrow sticking in the dirt and cannot stop a column of armed men. I did not think that you were a coward, too, Kitembo."

The black scowled. "Nor do men with safety call me a coward," he snapped; "but neither am I a fool and better than you do I know the danger signals of the forest. We shall go on because we are brave men, but many will never come back. Also, your plans will fail."

At this Zveri flew into one of his frequent rages and though the men continued the march, they were in a sullen mood and many were the ugly glances that were cast at Zveri and his lieutenants.

Shortly after noon the expedition halted for the noon-day rest. They had been passing through a dense woods, gloomy and depressing, and there was neither song nor laughter, nor a great deal of conversation as the men squatted together in little knots while they devoured the cold food that constituted their midday meal.

Suddenly, from somewhere far above, a voice floated down to them. Weird and uncanny, it spoke to them in a Bantu dialect that most of them could understand. "Turn back, children of Mulungu," it cried. "Turn back before you die! Desert the white men before it is too late."

That was all. The men crouched fearfully, looking up into the trees. It was Zveri who broke the silence. "What the hell was that?" he demanded. "What did it say?"

"It warned us to turn back," said Kitembo.

"There will be no turning back," snapped Zveri.

"I do not know about that," replied Kitembo.

"I thought you wanted to be a king," cried Zveri. "You'd make a hell of a king."

For the moment Kitembo had forgotten the dazzling prize that Zveri had held before his eyes for months—to be king of Kenya. That was worth risking much for.

"We will go on," he said.

"You may have to use force," said Zveri, "but stop at nothing. We must go on, no matter what happens." Then he turned to his other lieutenants. "Romero, you and Mori go to the rear of the column and shoot every man who refuses to advance."

The men had not as yet refused to go on and when the order to march was given, they sullenly took their places in the column.

For an hour they marched thus and then, far ahead, came the weird cry that many of them had heard before at Opar and a few minutes later a voice out of the distance called to them. "Desert the white men," it said.

The blacks whispered among themselves and it was evident that trouble was brewing, but Kitembo managed to persuade them to continue the march, a thing that Zveri never could have accomplished.

"I wish we could get that trouble-maker," said Zveri to Zora Drinov, as the two walked together near the head of the column.

"It is some one familiar with the workings of the native mind," said the girl. "Probably a medicine-man of some tribe through whose territory we are marching."

"I hope that it is nothing more than that," replied Zveri. "I have no doubt but that the man is a native, but I may be afraid that he is acting on instructions from either the British or the Italians, who hope thus to disorganize and delay us until they can mobilize a force with which to attack us."

"It has certainly shaken the morale of the men," said Zora, "for I believe that they attribute all of the weird

happenings, from the mysterious death of Jafar to the present time, to the same agency, to which their superstitious minds naturally attribute a supernatural origin."

"So much the worse for them then," said Zveri, "for they are going on whether they wish to or not and when they find that attempted desertion means death, they will wake up to the fact that it is not safe to trifle with Peter Zveri."

"They are many, Peter," the girl reminded him, "and we are few, in addition to which they are, thanks to you, well armed. It seems to me that you may have created a Frankenstein's monster that in the end will destroy us all."

"You are as bad as the blacks," growled Zveri, "making a mountain out of a molehill. Why, if I—"

Behind the rear of the column and again apparently from the air above them sounded the warning voice: "Desert the whites." Silence fell again upon the marching column, but the men moved on, exhorted by Kitembo and threatened by the revolvers of their white officers.

Presently the forest broke at the edge of a small plain, across which the trail led through buffalo grass that grew high above the heads of the marching men. They were well into this when, ahead of them, a rifle spoke, and then another and another, seemingly in a long line across their front.

Zveri ordered one of the blacks to rush Zora to the rear of the column into a position of safety, while he followed close behind her, ostensibly searching for Romero and shouting words of encouragement to the men. As yet no one had been hit, but the column had stopped and the men were rapidly losing all semblance of formation.

"Quick, Romero," shouted Zveri, "take command up in front. I will cover the rear with Mori and prevent desertions."

The Mexican sprang past him and with the aid of Ivitch and some of the black chiefs he deployed one company in a long skirmish line with which he advanced slowly, while Kitembo followed with half the balance of the expedition acting as a support, leaving Ivitch, Mori and Zveri to organize a reserve from the remainder.

After the first widely scattered shots, the firing had ceased, to be followed by a silence even more ominous to the overwrought nerves of the black soldiers.

The utter silence of the enemy, the lack of any sign of movement in the grasses ahead of them, coupled with the mysterious warnings which still rang in their ears, convinced the blacks that they faced no mortal foe.

"Turn back!" came mournfully from the grasses ahead. "This is the last warning. Death will follow disobedience."

The line wavered, and to steady it Romero gave the command to fire. In response came a rattle of musketry out of the grasses ahead of them and this time a dozen men went down, killed or wounded.

"Charge!" cried Romero, but instead the men wheeled about and broke for the rear and safety.

At sight of the advance line bearing down upon them, throwing away their rifles as they ran, the support turned and fled, carrying the reserve with it, and the whites were carried along in the mad rout.

In disgust, Miguel Romero fell back alone. He saw no enemy, for none pursued him

and this fact induced within him an uneasiness that the singing bullets had been unable to arouse. As he plodded on alone far in the rear of his companions he began to share to some extent the feeling of unreasoning terror that had seized his black companions, or at least, if not to share it, to sympathize with them.

It is one thing to face a foe that you can see and quite another to be beset by an invisible enemy, of whose very appearance, even, one is ignorant.

Shortly after Romero reentered the forest he saw some one walking along the trail ahead of him and presently, when he had an unobstructed view, he saw that it was Zora Drinov.

He called to her then and she turned and waited for him.

"I was afraid that you had been killed, Comrade," she said.

"I was born under a lucky star," he replied, smiling. "Men were shot down on either side of me and behind me. Where is Zveri?"

Zora shrugged. "I do not know," she said.

"Perhaps he is trying to reorganize the reserve," suggested Romero.

"Doubtless," said the girl shortly.

"I hope he is fleet of foot then," said the Mexican.

"Evidently he is," replied Zora.

"You should not have been left alone like this," said the man.

"I can take care of myself," replied Zora.

"Perhaps," he said, "but if you belonged to me—"

"I belong to no one, Comrade Romero," she replied icily.

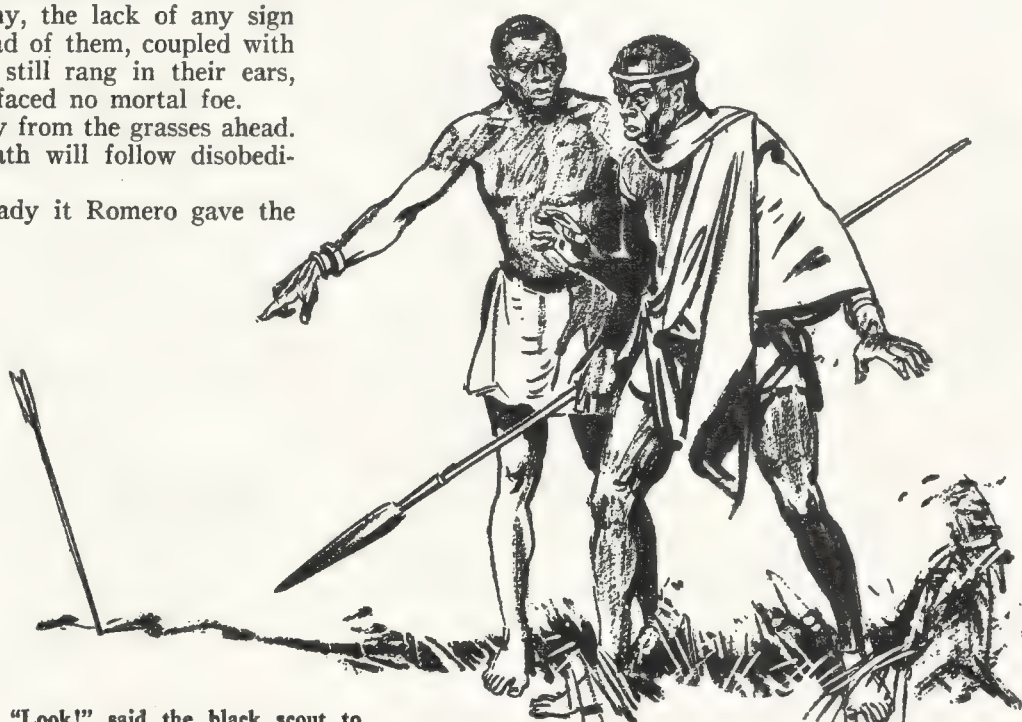
"Forgive me, señorita," he said. "I know that. I merely chose an unfortunate way of trying to say that if the girl I loved were here she would not have been left alone in the forest, especially when I believe, as Zveri must believe, that we are being pursued by an enemy."

"You do not like Comrade Zveri, do you, Romero?"

"Even to you, señorita," he replied, "I must admit, since you ask me, that I do not."

"I know that he has antagonized many."

"He has antagonized all—except you, señorita."



"Look!" said the black scout to Kitembo. "It is a warning!"

"Why should I be excepted?" she asked. "How do you know that he has not antagonized me also?"

"Not deeply, I am sure," he said, "or else you would not have consented to become his wife."

"And how do you know that I have?" she asked.

"Comrade Zveri boasts of it often," replied Romero.

"Oh, he does!" Nor did she make any other comment.

CHAPTER XIX

A GULF THAT WAS BRIDGED

THE general rout of Zveri's forces ended only when their last camp had been reached and even then only for part of the command, for as night fell it was discovered that fully twenty-five per cent of the men were missing and among the absentees were Zora and Romero.

As the stragglers came in Zveri questioned each about the girl, but no one had seen her. He tried to organize an expedition to go back in search of her, but no one would accompany him. He threatened and pleaded, only to discover that he had lost all control of his men.

Perhaps he would have gone back alone as he insisted that he intended doing, but he was relieved of this necessity when, well after dark, the two walked into camp together.

At sight of them Zveri was both relieved and angry. "Why didn't you remain with me?" he snapped at Zora.

"Because I cannot run so fast as you," she replied, and Zveri said no more.

From the darkness of the trees above the camp came the now familiar warning: "Desert the whites!" A long silence followed this, broken only by the nervous whisperings of the blacks, and then the voice spoke again. "The trails to your own countries are free from danger, but death walks always with the white men. Throw away your uniforms and leave the white men to the jungle and to me."

A black warrior leaped to his feet and stripped the French uniform from his body, throwing it upon a cooking fire that burned near him. Instantly others followed his example.

"Stop that!" cried Zveri.

"Silence, white man!" growled Kitembo.

"Kill the whites!" shouted a naked Basembo warrior.

Instantly there was a rush toward the whites, who were gathered near Zveri, and then from above them came a warning cry. "The whites are mine!" it cried. "Leave them to me."

For an instant the advancing warriors halted and then he, who had constituted himself their leader, maddened perhaps by his hatred and his blood lust, advanced again, grasping his rifle menacingly.

From above a bow-string twanged. The black, dropping his rifle, screamed as he tore at an arrow protruding from his chest and, as he fell forward upon his face, the other blacks fell back, and the whites were left alone, while the negroes huddled by themselves in a far corner of the camp.

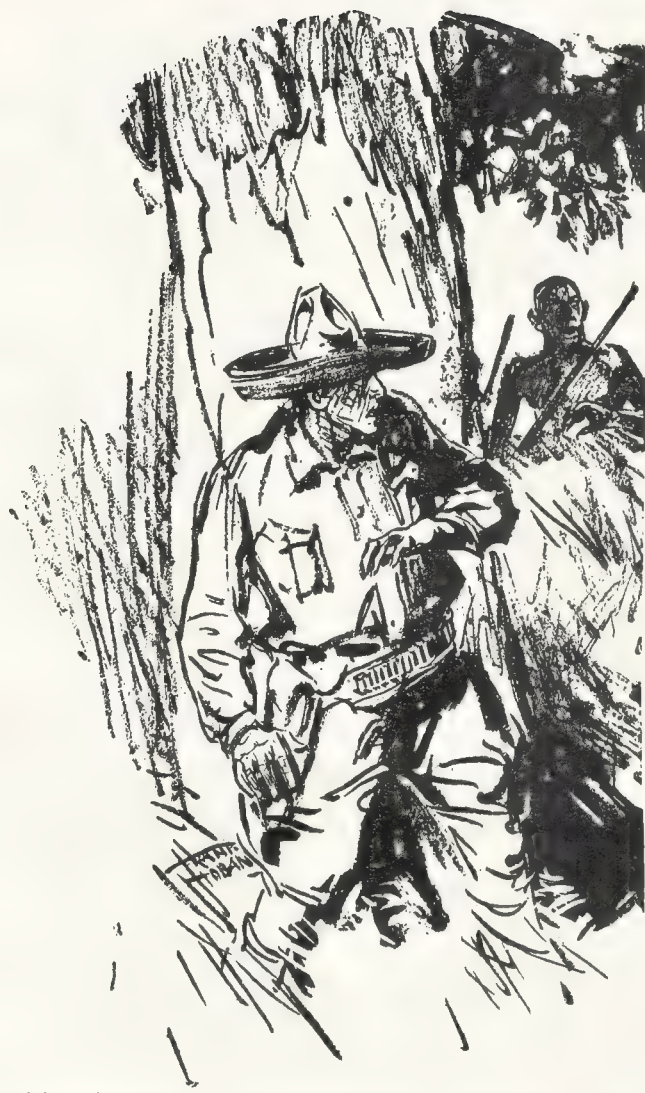
Many of them would have deserted that night, but they feared the darkness of the jungle and the menace of the thing hovering above them.

Zveri strode angrily to and fro, cursing his luck, cursing the blacks, cursing everyone. "If I had had any help, if I had had any coöperation," he grumbled, "this would not have happened, but I cannot do everything alone."

"You have done this pretty much alone," said Romero.

"What do you mean?" demanded Zveri.

"I mean that you have made such an overbearing ass of yourself that you have antagonized everyone in the



expedition, but even so they might have carried on if they had had any confidence in your courage—no man likes to follow a coward."

"You call me that, you yellow greaser?" shouted Zveri, reaching for his revolver.

"Cut that," snapped Romero. "I have you covered. And let me tell you now that if it wasn't for Señorita Drinov I would kill you on the spot and rid the world of at least one crazy mad dog that is threatening the entire world with the hydrophobia of hate and suspicion. Señorita Drinov saved my life once. I have not forgotten that and because, perhaps, she loves you, you are safe, unless I am forced to kill you in self-defense."

"This is utter insanity," cried Zora. "There are five of us here alone with a band of unruly blacks who fear and hate us. Tomorrow, doubtless, we shall be deserted by them. If we hope ever to get out of Africa alive, we must stick together. Forget your quarrels, both of you, and let us work together in harmony hereafter for our mutual salvation."

"For your sake, señorita, yes," said Romero.

"Comrade Drinov is right," said Ivitch.

Zveri dropped his hand from his gun and turned sulkily away, and for the balance of the night peace, if not happiness, held sway in the disorganized camp of the conspirators.

When morning came the whites saw that the blacks had all discarded their French uniforms, and from the concealing foliage of a near-by tree other eyes had noted this same fact—gray eyes that were touched by the shadow of a grim smile.



"Come!" said the black chief—but as he uttered the word something hummed above their heads, and Kitembo clutched at an arrow in his chest.

There were no black boys now to serve the whites, for even their personal servants had deserted them to for-gather with the men of their own blood, and so the five prepared their own breakfast, after Zveri's attempt to command the services of some of their boys had met with surly refusal.

While they were eating, Kitembo approached them, accompanied by the headmen of the different tribes that were represented in the personnel of the expedition. "We are leaving with our people for our own countries," said the Basembo chief. "We leave food for your journey to your own camp. Many of our warriors wish to kill you and that we cannot prevent if you attempt to accompany us, for they fear the vengeance of the ghosts that have followed you for many moons. Remain here until tomorrow. After that you are free to go where you will."

"But," expostulated Zveri, "you can't leave us like this, without porters or askaris."

"No longer can you tell us what we can do, white man," said Kitembo, "for you are few and we are many and your power over us is broken. In everything you have failed. We do not follow such a leader."

"You can't do it," growled Zveri. "You will all be punished for this, Kitembo."

"Who will punish us?" demanded the black. "The English? The French? The Italians? You do not dare go to them. They would punish you, not us. Perhaps you will go to Ras Tafari. He would have your heart cut out and your body thrown to the dogs, if he knew what you were planning."

"But you can't leave this white woman alone here in the

jungle without servants or porters or adequate protection," insisted Zveri.

"I do not intend to leave the white woman," said Kitembo. "She is going with me." And then it was that for the first time, the whites realized that the headmen had surrounded them and that they were covered by many rifles.

As he had talked, Kitembo had come closer to Zveri, at whose side stood Zora Drinov, and now the black chief reached out quickly and grasped her by the wrist. "Come!" he said, and as he uttered the word something hummed above their heads and Kitembo, chief of the Basembos, clutched at an arrow in his chest.

"Do not look up," cried a voice from above. "Keep your eyes upon the ground, for whosoever looks up dies. Listen well to what I have to say, black men. Go your way to your own countries, leaving behind you all of the white people. Do not harm them. They belong to me. I have spoken."

Wide-eyed and trembling, the black headmen fell back from the whites, leaving

Kitembo writhing upon the ground. They hastened to cross the camp to their fellows, all of whom were now thoroughly terrified, and before the chief of the Basembos ceased his death-struggle, the black tribesmen had seized the loads which they had previously divided amongst them and were pushing and elbowing for precedence along the game trail that led out of camp toward the west.

Watching them depart, the whites sat in stupefied silence, which was not broken until after the last black had gone and they were alone.

"What do you suppose that thing meant by saying we belong to him?" asked Ivitch in a slightly thickened voice.

"How could I know?" growled Zveri.

"Perhaps it is a man-eating ghost," suggested Romero with a smile.

"It has done about all the harm it can do now," said Zveri. "It ought to leave us alone for awhile."

"It is not such a malign spirit," said Zora. "It can't be, for it certainly saved me from Kitembo."

"Saved you for itself," said Ivitch.

"Nonsense!" said Romero. "The purpose of that mysterious voice from the air is just as obvious as is the fact that it is the voice of a man. It is the voice of some one who wanted to defeat the purposes of this expedition and I imagine Zveri guessed pretty close to the truth yesterday when he attributed it to English or Italian sources that were endeavoring to delay us until they could mobilize a sufficient force against us."

"Which proves," said Zveri, "what I have suspected for a long time: that there is more than one traitor among us!" And he looked meaningfully at Romero.

"What it means," said Romero, "is that crazy, hare-brained theories always fail when they are put to the test. You thought that all the blacks in Africa would rush to your standard and drive all the foreigners into the ocean. In theory, perhaps, you were right, but in practice one man, with a knowledge of native psychology which you did not have, burst your entire dream like a bubble, and for every other harebrained theory in the world there is always a stumblingblock of fact."

"You talk like a traitor to the cause," said Ivitch threateningly.

"And what are you going to do about it?" demanded the Mexican. "I am fed up with all of you and your whole rotten, selfish plan. There isn't an honest hair in your head nor in Zveri's. I can accord Tony and Señorita Drinov the benefit of a doubt, for I cannot conceive either of them as knaves. As I was deluded, so may they have been deluded, as you and your kind have striven for years to delude countless millions of others."

"You are not the first traitor to the cause," said Zveri, "nor will you be the first traitor to pay the penalty of his treason."

"That is not a good way to talk now," said Mori. "We are not already too many. If we fight and kill one another, perhaps none of us will come out of Africa alive. But if you kill Miguel, you will have to kill me, too, and perhaps you will not be successful. Perhaps it is you who will be killed."

"Tony is right," said the girl. "Let us call a truce until we reach civilization." And so it was that under something of the nature of an armed truce, the five set forth the following morning on the back trail toward their base camp, while upon another trail, a full day ahead of them, Tarzan and his Waziri warriors took a short-cut for Opar.

"La may not be there," Tarzan exclaimed to Muviro, "but I intend to punish Oah and Dooth for their treachery and thus make it possible for the high priestess to return in safety, if she still lives."

"But how about the white enemies in the jungle back of us, Bwana?" asked Muviro.

"They shall not escape us," said Tarzan. "They are weak and inexperienced to the jungle. They move slowly. We may always overtake them when we will. It is La who concerns me most, for she is a friend, while they are only enemies."

Many miles away, the object of his friendly solicitude approached a clearing in the jungle, a man-made clearing that was evidently intended for a camp site for a large body of men, though now only a few rude shelters were occupied by a handful of blacks.

At the woman's side walked Wayne Colt, his strength now fully regained, and at their heels paced Jad-bal-ja the golden lion.

"We have found it at last," said the man.

"Yes, but it is deserted," replied La. "They have all left."

"No," said Colt, "I see some blacks over by those shelters at the right."

"It is well," said La. "And now I must leave you."

"I hate to say good-by," said the man, "but I know where your heart is and that all your kindness to me has only delayed your return to Opar. It is futile for me to attempt to express my gratitude, but I think that you know what is in my heart."

"Yes," said the woman, "and it is enough for me to know that I have made a friend, I who have so few loyal friends."

"I wish that you would let me come with you to Opar," he said. "You are going back to face enemies and you may need whatever little help I should be able to give you."

She shook her head. "No, that cannot be," she replied. "All the suspicion and hatred of me that was engendered

in the hearts of some of my people was caused by my friendship for a man of another world. Were you to return with me and assist me in regaining my throne, it would but arouse their suspicions still further. If Jad-bal-ja and I cannot succeed alone, three of us could accomplish no more."

"Won't you at least be my guest for the balance of the day?" he asked. "I can't offer you much hospitality," he added with a rueful smile.

"No, my friend," she said. "I cannot take the chance of losing Jad-bal-ja; nor could you take the chance of losing your blacks, and I fear that they would not remain together in the same camp. Good-by, Wayne Colt. But do not say that I go alone, at whose side walks Jad-bal-ja."

From the base camp La knew the trail back to Opar and as Colt watched her depart, he felt a lump rise in his throat, for the beautiful girl and the great lion seemed personifications of loveliness and strength and loneliness.

With a sigh he turned into the camp and crossed to where the blacks lay sleeping through the midday heat.

He awoke them and at sight of him they were all very much excited, for they had been members of his own safari from the Coast and recognized him immediately.

Having long given him up for lost, they were at first inclined to be a little bit frightened until they had convinced themselves that he was, indeed, flesh and blood.

Since the killing of Dorsky they had had no master and they confessed to him that they had been seriously con-

"I thought that a hideous gulf separated us, one that I could never span."





She turned fiercely upon Zveri. "I could have killed you any one of a dozen times in the last few years—but I wanted more than your life!"

sidering deserting the camp and returning to their own countries, for they had been unable to rid their minds of the weird and terrifying occurrences that the expedition had witnessed in this strange country, in which they felt very much alone and helpless without the guidance and protection of a white master.

ACROSS the plain of Opar, toward the ruined city, walked a girl and a lion, and behind them, at the summit of the escarpment which she had just scaled, a man halted, looking out across the plain, and saw them in the distance.

Behind him a hundred warriors swarmed up the rocky cliff. As they gathered about the tall, bronzed, gray-eyed figure that had preceded them, the man pointed.

"La!" he said.

"And Numa!" said Muviro. "He is stalking her. It is strange, Bwana, that he does not charge."

"He will not charge," said Tarzan. "Why, I do not know, but I know he will not—because it is Jad-bal-ja."

"The eyes of Tarzan are like eyes of the eagle," said Muviro.

"Muviro sees only a woman and a lion, but Tarzan sees La and Jad-bal-ja."

"I do not need my eyes for those two," said the ape-man. "I have a nose."

"I, too, have a nose," said Muviro, "but it is only a piece of flesh that sticks out from my face."

Tarzan smiled. "As a little child you did not have to depend upon your nose for your life and your food," he said, "as I have always done, then and since. Come, my children, La and Jad-bal-ja will be glad to see us."

It was the keen ears of Jad-bal-ja that caught the first faint warning noises from the rear. He halted and turned, his great head raised majestically, his ears forward, the skin of his nose wrinkling to stimulate his sense of smell.

Then he voiced a low growl and La stopped and turned back to discover the cause of his displeasure.

As her eyes noted the approaching column, her heart sank. Even Jad-bal-ja could not protect her against so many. She thought then to attempt to outdistance them to the city, but when she glanced again at the ruined walls at the far side of the valley she knew that that plan was quite hopeless, as she would not have the strength to maintain a fast pace for so great a distance, while among those black warriors there must be many trained runners who could easily outdistance her.

And so, resigned to her fate, she stood and waited, while Jad-bal-ja, with flattened head and twitching tail, advanced slowly to meet the oncoming men and as he advanced his savage growls rose to the tumult of tremendous roars that shook the earth as he sought to frighten away this menace to his loved mistress.

But the men came and then, of a sudden, La saw that one who came in advance of the others was lighter in color and her heart leaped in her breast. Then she recognized him and tears came to the eyes of the savage high priestess of Opar.

"It is Tarzan! Jad-bal-ja, it is Tarzan!" she cried.

Perhaps at the same instant the lion recognized his master, for the roaring ceased, the eyes no longer glared, no longer was the great head flattened as he trotted forward to meet the ape-man.

Like a great dog, he reared up before Tarzan, and with a scream of terror little Nkima leaped from the ape-man's shoulder and scampered, screaming, back to Muviro, since bred in the fiber of Nkima was the knowledge that Numa was always Numa.

With his great paws on Tarzan's shoulder Jad-bal-ja licked the bronzed cheek, and then Tarzan pushed him aside and walked rapidly toward La, while Nkima, his terror gone, jumped frantically up and down on Muviro's

shoulder, calling the lion many jungle names for having frightened him.

"At last!" exclaimed Tarzan, as he stood face to face with La.

"At last," repeated the girl, "you have come back from your hunt."

"I came back immediately," replied the man, "but you had gone."

"You came back?" she asked.

"Yes, La," replied Tarzan. "I traveled far before I made a kill, but at last I found meat and brought it to you, and you were gone and the rain had obliterated your spoor and though I searched for days I could not find you."

"Had I thought that you intended to return," she said, "I would have remained there forever."

"You should have known that I would not have left you thus," replied Tarzan.

"La is sorry," she said.

"And you have not been back to Opar since?" he asked.

"Jad-bal-ja and I are on our way to Opar now," she said. "I was lost for a long time. Only recently did I find the trail to Opar and then, too, there was the white man who was lost and sick with fever. I remained with him until the fever left him and his strength came back, because I thought that he might be a friend of Tarzan's."

"What was this man's name?" asked the ape-man.

"Wayne Colt," she replied.

The ape-man smiled. "Did he appreciate what you did for him?" he asked.

"Yes, he wanted to come to Opar with me and help me regain my throne."

"You liked him then, La?" he asked.

"I liked him very much," she said, "but not in the same way that I like Tarzan."

He touched her shoulder in a half-caress. "La, the immutable!" he murmured, and then, with a sudden toss of his head as though he would clear his mind of sad thoughts, he turned once more toward Opar. "Come," he said, "the Queen is returning to her throne."

The unseen eyes of Opar watched the advancing column. They recognized La and Tarzan and the Waziri and some there were who guessed the identity of Jad-bal-ja, and Oah was frightened and Dooth trembled and little Nao, who hated Oah, was almost happy, as happy as one may be who carries a broken heart into one's bosom.

Oah had ruled with a tyrant hand, and Dooth had been a weak fool, whom no one longer trusted, and there were whisperings now among the ruins, whisperings that would have frightened Oah and Dooth had they heard them, and the whisperings spread among the priestesses and the warrior priests, with the result that when Tarzan and Jad-bal-ja led the Waziri into the courtyard of the outer temple there was no one there to resist them, but instead voices called down to them from the dark arches of surrounding corridors pleading for mercy and voicing earnest assurance of their future loyalty to La.

As they made their way into the city they heard far in the interior of the temple a sudden burst of noise. High voices were punctuated by loud screams, and then came silence, and when they came to the throne-room the cause of it was apparent to them, for lying in a welter



of blood were the bodies of Oah and Dooth, with those of a half-dozen priests and priestesses who had remained loyal to them—and, but for these, the great throne-room was empty.

Once again did La, the high priestess of the Flaming God, resume her throne as Queen of Opar.

That night Tarzan, Lord of the Jungle, ate again from the golden platters of Opar, while young girls soon to become priestesses of the Flaming God served meats and fruits and wines so old that no living man knew their vintage, nor in what forgotten vineyard grew the grapes that went into their making.

But in such things Tarzan found little interest and he was glad when the new day found him at the head of his Waziri crossing the plain of Opar toward the barrier cliffs. Upon his bronzed shoulder sat Nkima, and at the ape-man's side paced the golden lion, while in column behind him marched his hundred Waziri warriors.

IT was a tired and disheartened company of whites that approached their base camp after a long, monotonous and uneventful journey.

Zveri and Ivitch were in the lead, followed by Zora Drinov, while a considerable distance to the rear Romero and Mori walked side by side, and such had been the order in which they had marched all these long days.

Wayne Colt was sitting in the shade of one of the shelters and the blacks were lolling in front of another, a short distance away as Zveri and Ivitch came into sight.

Colt rose and came forward, and it was then that Zveri spied him.

"You damned traitor!" Zveri cried. "I'll get you if it's the last thing I do on earth!" And even as he spoke he drew his revolver and fired point blank at the unarmed American.

His first shot grazed Colt's side without breaking the



"I do not know who he is," said Zora, "other than that he is the man who saved my life."

skin, but Zveri fired no second shot, for almost simultaneously with the report of his own shot another rang out behind him and Peter Zveri, dropping his pistol and clutching at his back, staggered drunkenly upon his feet.

Ivitch wheeled about. "My God, Zora, what have you done?" he cried.

"What I have been waiting to do for twelve years," replied the girl. "What I have been waiting to do ever since I was little more than a child."

Wayne Colt had run forward and seized Zveri's gun from the ground where it had fallen, and Romero and Mori now came up at a run.

Zveri had sunk to the ground and was glaring savagely about him.

"Who shot me?" he screamed. "I know—it was that damned greaser."

"It was I," said Zora Drinov.

"You!" gasped Zveri.

Suddenly she turned to Wayne Colt. "You might as well know the truth," she said. "I am not a Red and never have been. This man killed my father and my mother and an older brother and sister. My father was—well, never mind who he was. He is avenged now." She turned fiercely upon Zveri. "I could have killed you any one of a dozen times in the last few years," she said, "but I waited because I wanted more than your life. I wanted to help kill the hideous schemes with which you and your kind are seeking to wreck the happiness of a world."

Peter Zveri sat on the ground, staring at her incredulously, his wide eyes slowly glazing. Suddenly he coughed and a torrent of blood gushed from his mouth. Then he sank back dead.

Romero had moved close to Ivitch. Suddenly he poked the muzzle of a revolver into the Russian's ribs. "Drop your gun," he said. "I'm taking no chances on you either."

Ivitch, paling, did as he was bid.

Across the clearing a figure stood at the edge of the jungle.

It had not been there a scant instant before; it had appeared silently as though out of thin air. Zora Drinov was the first to perceive it. She voiced a cry of surprised recognition and as the others turned to follow the direction of her eyes, they saw a bronzed white man, naked but for a loin-cloth of leopard skin, coming toward them. He moved with the easy, majestic grace of a lion and there was much about him that suggested the king of beasts.

"Who is that?" asked Colt.

"I do not know who he is," replied Zora, "other than that he is the man who saved my life when I was lost in the jungle."

The man halted before them.

"Who are you?" demanded Wayne Colt.

"I am Tarzan of the Apes," replied the other. "I have seen and heard all that has occurred here. The plan that was fostered by this man," he nodded at the body of Zveri, "has failed and he is dead. This girl has avowed herself. She is not one of you. My people are camped a short distance away. I shall take her to them and see that she reaches civilization in safety. For the rest of you I have no sympathy. You may get out of the jungle as best you may. I have spoken."

"They are not all what you think them, my friend," said Zora.

"What do you mean?" demanded Tarzan.

"Romero and Mori have learned their lesson. They avowed themselves openly during a quarrel when our blacks deserted us."

"I heard them," said Tarzan.

She looked at him in surprise. "You heard them?" she asked.

"I have heard much that has gone on in many of your camps," replied the ape-man, "but I do not know that I may believe all that I hear."

"I think you may believe what you heard them say," Zora assured him. "I am quite confident that they are sincere."

"Very well," said Tarzan. "If they wish they may come with me also, but these other two will have to shift for themselves."

"Not the American," said Zora.

"No? And why not?" demanded the ape-man.

"Because he is a special agent in the employ of the United States Government," replied the girl.

The entire party, including Colt, looked at her in astonishment.

"How did you learn that?" demanded Colt.

"The message that you sent when you first came to camp and we were here alone was intercepted by one of Zveri's agents. Now do you understand how I know?"

"Yes," said Colt. "It is quite plain."

"That is why Zveri called you a traitor and tried to kill you," Zora explained.

Tarzan, Guard of the Jungle

"And how about this other?" demanded Tarzan, indicating the surly Ivitch. "Is he also merely a sheep in wolf's clothing?"

"He is one of those paradoxes who are so numerous," replied Zora scornfully. "He is one of those Reds who is all yellow."

Tarzan turned to the blacks who had come forward and were standing, listening questioningly to a conversation they could not understand.

"I know your country," he said to them in their own dialect. "It lies near the end of the railroad that runs to the Coast."

"Yes, master," said one of the blacks.

"You will take this white man with you as far as the railroad. See that he has enough to eat and is not harmed, and then tell him to get out of the country. Start now." Then he turned back to the whites. "The rest of you will follow me to my camp." And with that he turned and swung away toward the trail by which he had entered the camp.

Behind him followed the four who owed to his humanity more than they could ever know, nor had they known could they have guessed that his great tolerance, courage, resourcefulness and the protective instinct that had often safeguarded them sprang not from his human progenitors, but from his lifelong association with the natural beasts of the forest and the jungle, who have these instinctive qualities far more strongly developed than do the unnatural beasts of civilization, in whom the greed and lust of competition have dimmed the luster of these noble qualities where they have not eradicated them entirely.

Behind the others walked Zora Drinov and Wayne Colt, side by side.

"I thought you were dead," she said.

"And I thought that *you* were dead," he replied.

"And worse than that," she continued, "I thought that, whether dead or alive, I might never tell you what was in my heart."

"And I thought that a hideous gulf separated us, one that I could never span to ask you the question I wanted to ask you," he answered in a low tone.

She turned toward him, her eyes filled with tears, her lips trembling.

"And I thought, Wayne, that, whether alive or dead, I could never say yes to that question, if you did ask me," she replied.

A curve in the trail hid them from the sight of the others as he took her in his arms and drew her lips to his.

THE END

NEXT month begins Edgar Rice Burroughs' splendid novel "The Land of Hidden Men"—the story of a young American who ventures into the utmost jungles of remote Cambodia and there encounters most extraordinary adventures. For in Mr. Burroughs' story that strange people the Khmers, supposed to have perished, reappear from out the jungle fastnesses and again take possession of the great cities so long abandoned in the forest. And the American fights desperately to rescue from them the beautiful girl whom their mad king covets. . . . Be sure to read this remarkable story—in the next, the May, issue.

Will It Ever Happen?

*Will Vigilante days and ways
return to America—*

By CAPTAIN
R. E. DUPUY

THE Montreal local gate slammed, a whistle shrilled. The pneumatic lift sobbed and the great airliner slid upward on its cradle into the night. The illuminated sign over the gateway died as the tripping pauls far overhead clicked dryly and the ship went whirring away unseen.

Elliman, leaning against the platform guard rail, watched the sign blaze again:—"Chicago Express—6:18." Five minutes to wait before the ship would be hoisted on its cradle from the hangars below to the loading-platform—five minutes more before she left. He sighed and turning, cast his glance over the blurred lights of the city below.

The dome of the Empire State Building glowed beneath, seemingly so near that one could reach out and touch it, despite the fact that the depot platform towered twenty stories above its pinnacle. A great building, even though it was twenty years old.

To Elliman there was a never-ending fascination in watching that agglomeration of lights twinkle, blaze and glow. Nothing like it in the world. Little old New York! Were it daylight, now, one would be able to see the tiny dots below gather, swirl, part as they swept on their ant-like, various ways. What were they doing, thinking and saying? Who could tell? Somehow, up here one got an impression of power; felt as if he were better, more perceptive than those hordes below.

"Well, old-timer," rang a voice in his ears, "always early, what? You'll never be a real rushing commuter!" Davis, overloaded with bundles, was brimming as always with the enthusiasm he communicated in the twice-daily bridge game in the smoker.

"Hello, Bill." Elliman half-turned his head toward the open again. "I get up here early just to have the pleasure of looking this old town over. It thrills me, somehow."

Davis swung in beside him.

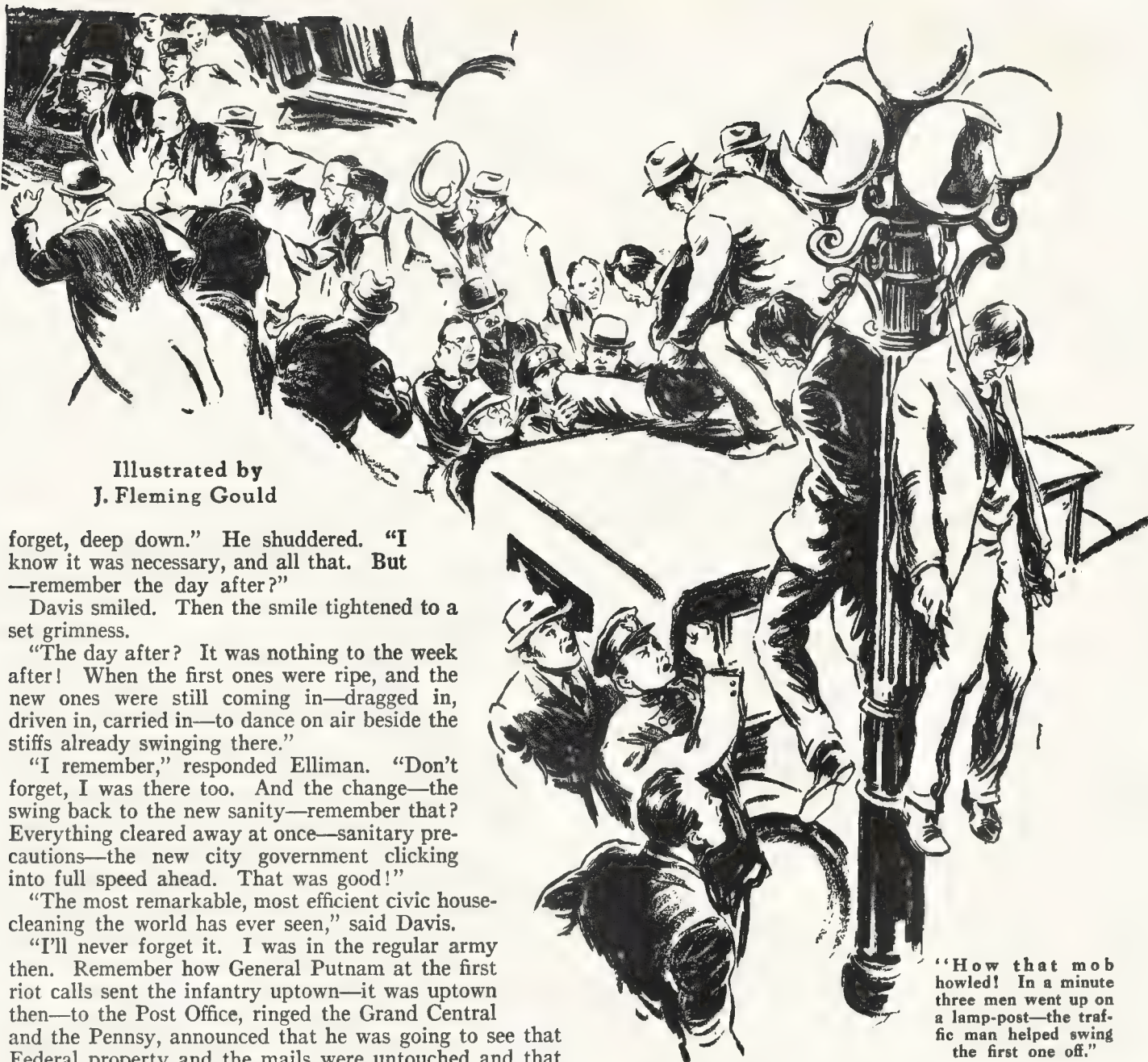
"Once upon a time," he remarked, bobbing his head toward an outstanding island of lights in the criss-cross network below, "I'd have called the funny-wagon for a guy who predicted I'd be looking things over from this height. Take Times Square, there. Never think that five minutes ago—no, three minutes—I was jumbling my way through the crowds."

"Liberty Square," Elliman corrected him. "It's hard to teach old dogs new tricks, isn't it? I always find myself calling it 'Times Square' too, unless I think."

The other man grunted.

"Liberty Square," he repeated. "No one ought to forget that name and what it means, either. Funny creatures we are, what?"

"Aint it a fact? Gosh! Maybe it's because we want to



Illustrated by
J. Fleming Gould

forget, deep down." He shuddered. "I know it was necessary, and all that. But—remember the day after?"

Davis smiled. Then the smile tightened to a set grimness.

"The day after? It was nothing to the week after! When the first ones were ripe, and the new ones were still coming in—dragged in, driven in, carried in—to dance on air beside the stiff already swinging there."

"I remember," responded Elliman. "Don't forget, I was there too. And the change—the swing back to the new sanity—remember that? Everything cleared away at once—sanitary precautions—the new city government clicking into full speed ahead. That was good!"

"The most remarkable, most efficient civic house-cleaning the world has ever seen," said Davis.

"I'll never forget it. I was in the regular army then. Remember how General Putnam at the first riot calls sent the infantry uptown—it was uptown then—to the Post Office, ringed the Grand Central and the Pennsy, announced that he was going to see that Federal property and the mails were untouched and that for the rest of it Father Knickerbocker would have to wash his own dirty linen himself? Well, I was one of those soldiers—walked a post for two days, on Seventh Avenue. We saw a lot there too. I remember one fellow—he broke away from a Vigilante squad and came running to our side; they wouldn't shoot at him—afraid they'd hit soldiers. The rat waved a roll of bills in front of my nose. Almost climbed on the point of my bayonet. I'll never forget his yells when they took him away."

"Old Put had the right idea. They tried to court-martial him afterwards, didn't they?"

"There was some mention of it, but it didn't take. New York State presented him with a decoration and the whole country was up in arms by that time, anyway. So the wishy-washy boys kept their mouths shut."

An incoming Florida Coast ship whanged into the guides above, in the glare of the port lights, and came sliding down to the unloading platform below them. Both men watched her slip by, the windows crowded with passengers. Then Davis resumed:

"Well, I was right in Times—I mean Liberty—Square, when it all started."

"Maluco?" queried Elliman.

"Yep—Maluco. Funny thing, too. He didn't do anything more than hundreds of others had done. He put that guy—oh, what was his name? Fort-something-or-other—Fortinelli, that's it. Fortinelli. They had the West Side market racket, remember?"

"I think so. They split over something or other, and Maluco put Fortinelli on the spot right in front of the Astor, didn't he?"

"Check. I wasn't fifty feet away. Heard the guns go, saw a taxicab window spitting fire and a guy topple over. The cab started away and then a woman screamed—screamed horribly, and held something up—a tiny baby—with blood over its face. That did it. Some one—God knows who—shouted something, the crowd which had been cowering from the guns swirled forward and in a second that cab was stuck dead in a howling mob. Gee, how that mob did bellow! The cab went apart—just dissolved. And in a minute three men went up on one of those ornamental lamp-posts. Hanged with their own waist-belts."

"The cops—they didn't attempt to stop 'em at all, did they?"

"Stop nothing! The traffic man on that post helped to

"How that mob howled! In a minute three men went up on a lamp-post—the traffic man helped swing the first one off."

swing the first one off. And when the reserves got there some one spotted some one else—some racketeer in the crowd—and he went up. Then everything went hog-wild. You remember, it spread by phone. Inside of an hour detectives all over the city were leading Vigilante committees into speak-easies and pointing out the gangsters and racketeers, while the harness bulls were keeping the crowds back. At first they took 'em all up to Times—I mean Liberty—Square and hanged 'em there."

"I remember. About that time we got the call to arms on Governor's Island; every bit of Federal property was under guard in an hour—throughout the city."

"Yep. The regulars worked fast. And just about that time the central Vigilante committee took over City Hall, gave its ultimatum to the Mayor and the business went on. The only real disturbance was in the Italian district. When the wops found out the lid was off they went out of their heads; not only paid off their debts to their gangster rulers, but began to do some private vengeance as well. That was nasty. But the cops soon stopped that. Got it absolutely under control the third day."

"CHICAGO EXPRESS! Lift Ten! Going out at 6:18!" roared the loud-speakers and the men turned toward the gate. The crowd streamed in. Davis and Elliman found their seats in the smoking compartment. Johnson was already there. The trio fixed their card-table and the packs were being shuffled when Arbuthnot's huge bulk squeezed in.

"All set, boys!" he boomed. "Going to take it all away in an hour. I'm in a fighting mood tonight. Have you on your uppers before we pass Youngstown!"

"Yes, you will!" giped Elliman. And Johnson grabbed wildly at something under the big man's body.

"Give me a chance, big boy," he called. "Let me get this book out of the way."

"Going highbrow, are you?" remarked Arbuthnot, picking up the volume. "'The Rise and Fall of Gangland.' That's Professor Mix's book, isn't it?"

"Yes. I've got to bring it home for my kid. He's studying civics now and getting all het up over the 1933 house-cleaning. Got to debate on it."

"That's a coincidence," said Elliman. "Davis and I were just reminiscing on that before we came on board. You birds weren't living around New York then, were you?"

"Not me," responded Johnson. "But I was in on the Chicago doings."

"I was," put in Arbuthnot, settling himself and filling his pipe. "As a matter of fact, I was on the central Vigilante committee. Not an important member, of course. I was a law-student then—in Judge Adams' office. Odd how that thing started, too. A gang of lawyers, of all persons!"

The big ship started upward, the station lights sinking beneath the window level. A slight shock as the craft was released from its cradle, a floating sensation, and they were off.

"Yes, sir," Arbuthnot went on. "I could tell your kid something about that. But its all in the book, I presume. However, if you want to bring the kid around tonight—it's only a hundred miles to our place; you can hop it in your own machine in twenty minutes, Johnson—I'll be glad to help. Come around about nine o'clock."

"How did that committee work?" asked Elliman. "I was in the Service then—just an onlooker."

"Why, it all grew out of this Young Crusader business. You know—the association of New York lawyers to bring about the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. We began to talk and talk. Remarkable how those things get going. It wasn't six months before we had an or-

ganization—under cover, of course, but a working organization. Men who knew what they were doing.

"First, only a few of us mentioned the idea—and that in whispers. Then as the men began to sound one another out, it grew. We knew that something would happen, sometime. You can't have organized murder going on forever, you know. And what we were afraid of was that when the crash came the Reds would get into action. So we decided that when the gusher went, we'd be the safety-cap. Get the bad element out, absolutely—and then clamp down, before the fire broke out. Why, as a matter of fact, the old General down there on Governor's Island had been sounded out long before the break came. We knew, and he knew, that so long as Federal property was left untouched the Army couldn't come in, not without the President's order, following the request of the Governor."

"You mean that everything was ready?"

"Ready? Of course. Ten minutes after the mob hung Maluco and his two gunmen the central committee visited the Mayor. Ten minutes later we had the Governor on the phone at Albany, were guaranteeing him that so long as he kept hands off the militia nothing would happen to anyone but the gangsters and their friends. And the men who made that guarantee—why, their names meant the entire financial district. As a matter of fact the President knew by phone within half an hour. And they both got the same guaranty. With the alternative of possible Red revolution if we didn't cap the gusher staring them in the face, they all saw the light. Hands off—that was the order! And we carried it out. The cops were only too ready to help as soon as they knew it meant the end of the old régime—crooked judges, disappearance of material witnesses, bail-jumping and all the cumbersome machinery we had been building up for years to protect the evil-doer. Just a moratorium, that's what it was. A moratorium on the courts until washday was over. And it spread like wildfire."

"I'll say it did," put in Johnson. "When Chi' found out that the sheep in New York were gunning for the wolves, our town went crazy. We cleaned things up—what I mean."

"Yes, even Miami did its bit. Remember how Flapone decorated a palm tree in his own front yard the morning after?"

"There was a lot of blood spilled, though," reflected Elliman aloud.

"Of course there was," returned Arbuthnot. "What else was there to do? We couldn't deport half of the men we wanted to—either they had false citizenship papers or they were alien Russians we couldn't send back because we didn't recognize the Soviet government and had no treaty with Russia. But outbound steamship travel took a big upward trend, anyway. When the boys found out how unhealthy life was becoming in the United States they got out—those who still enjoyed good health."

"I remember the Red reaction," said Davis; "they squawked for several hours, you know. Thought their time was ripe. Then the Vigilantes dropped down into Union Square, picked out fifty of the loudest squawkers and hanged 'em—draped 'em around the big flagpole—first come, first served. The bottom dropped out of the Red business at once—and for good."

ARBUTHNOT glanced out of the window. Far below, the name of a town was pricked out in electric lights—Wilkes-Barre.

"Listen, you fellows," he cut in. "We've been yammering away here wasting time for nearly fifteen minutes. Cut those cards and let's get busy. Thank God, we have America for Americans nowadays!"

Treasure in Jaloon

By BERTRAM
ATKEY

Illustrated by Everett Lowry

IT was the custom of Captain Cormorant to stay at home throughout the whole evening on every occasion of his wealthy and adoring wife's birthday, having first kindly helped her to plan an extraordinarily attractive meal—he, personally, taking great trouble to select a wine sufficiently worthy for him to toast her in. Later he would cheer her over another of the annual milestones with jests, idle fancies, fervencies and above all, those stories of his tolerably hectic past which she loved so well.

"No, heart of my life," he was saying to Louise on the night of her wrfstieth birthday, "I never yet have claimed to be a good man—but I have never ceased to combat the statement, formerly made far too freely, that I am a bad man. I am neither. I am merely a sorely afflicted man—one who unhappily was born into this world totally devoid of morals. Not an immoral man,—far from that,—but undeniably an un-moral man, Lord help me! My life,—up till that lucky evening when non-morally endeavoring to steal (in a way) your car, I inadvertently stole you in it,—my life has been a Forty Years' War against those who seemed banded together to achieve the downfall of an afflicted man! Myself!"

"Thank goodness, you beat them all, Lester! You swept them out of your path—your path toward me and my income that is so nice for us to have!" said Mrs. Cormorant warmly.

"Yes, I swept them—sometimes!" admitted the Captain, reaching over to press her hand. "But also there were occasions when I was swept!"

"I can't think how any man could ever have the courage to sweep you out of his path, Lester," said Louise. "And I shouldn't think a single woman in the world could have the heart to do it."

"They did—both married and single," declared the Captain. "Why, I suppose the most unmistakable reverse I ever suffered—my bitterest humiliation—was inflicted on me by a woman!"

"Oh, tell me about her, please?"

"With pleasure, my soul," agreed the Captain.

DURING one of my periods of what I may term partial eclipse (began Captain Cormorant, not without a certain relish)—or a total eclipse, indeed, it was—as far as this country is concerned. There had been misunderstandings at home, due wholly to the denseness, lack of vision and unsympathetic attitude of a number of people in England—some of them relatives of mine—who failed to understand that on account of my moral-less condition, it was necessary to deal with me just a shade more

This fine large adventure in rascality is blithely confessed by that candid scoundrel Captain Lester Cormorant.



He jumped back. Most of his party jumped with him. "Be not afraid," said I.

resiliently than with most other men. As a result of their stupidity I had left the country with some abruptness.

It so befell that I took with me on that occasion quite a portly sum of money—fortune having favored my misunderstood enterprise to that extent, at any rate. In due course I stayed my outward-bound career at a remote trading station on the African coast called, I believe, Fujuju, or a word to that effect. It was a place of unparalleled obscurity, and there was but one white resident, the trader, at that place. He was, I recall, a person of small blandishment or charm. His name was Gash.

And it was on an evening when we had been sitting late over our bottle of gin—that the man Gash first mentioned to me the unknown territory—unknown in those far-off days—of Jaloon. This was a region some sixty miles or so up the river Gumboosa, the mouth of which, enshrouded in a haze of miasmic mist swarming with fever mosquitoes, was not far north of Fujuju.

From the confidential conversation of the man Gash I learned that Jaloon was a region immensely rich in those natural resources which have always appealed strongly to me. Diamonds, for example—emeralds, rubies—natural resources of that nature. Gold-dust, nuggets—there were large quantities of the genuine stuff available to any bold, enterprising and unmoral adventurer. It is true that the denizens of Jaloon were fierce to the point of fury, and warlike to the stage of homicidal mania. But in all other respects they were as simple-minded as monkeys.

"If a man could get into their territory and survive long enough to get them savages interested in some toy or other, he'd make a fortune," said Gash, in a species of English. "But y'understand, Burleigh-Howard" (the name I was unmorally using at that time) "y'understand that the man who goes into Jaloon backs his trade goods with his life, no less. Mere damned beads are no good, y'understand. There was a trader once went in there with half a dozen barrels of colored glass beads. He never came out. . . . No, beads don't saw no wood with the Jaloons! But just as soon as I hit on what I call a good idea for an attractive import, not too dear at cost price, I'm going to take a whirl at the natural resources of Jaloon, Burleigh-Howard!" declared Gash rather muzzily.



"Better beer I never wish to taste," she said in the vernacular.

To cut a long story short, dear Louise, less than a month had passed before I had left Fujuju, gone some hundreds of miles south to Lokoko, a much larger port, where I purchased from a German trader certain merchandise and a cutter, and set sail steadily north to Jaloon. What merchandise, you ask, dear heart—as well you may.

Well, my cargo comprised simply a secondhand, two-pull beer-pump, a crate of cheap electric torches, and six crates of refills—batteries.

You ask what is a beer-engine, my love. Naturally. How should you know—you, whose life has been spent in an environment far too refined to allow the intrusion of even the merest mention of the ordinary, everyday commercial beer-engine beloved by the common man?

Briefly, soul of mine, a beer-engine is merely a particularly attractive form of pump or liquid elevator. Picture to yourself a shining mahogany counter, from the inner edge of which projects upward a handsome polished, porcelain lever, shaped rather like a medium-sized club, butt upward. The base of this attractive club-shaped lever or handle connects with pipes that in turn are connected with the barrels in the cellar below—connected in such a way that, if one pulls the lever forward with a firm, confident action, the beer gushes gayly forth through a shapely, polished outlet into the glass which is held invitingly under the tap. That is a beer-engine, Louise, my love; and upon such a device I had staked my life.

I crossed the bar of the Gumboosa and slowly worked my way up the turbid river. On the fifth day of the river voyage I was awakened in early morning by a thud close to my left ear.

I opened my eyes to perceive a poisoned arrow sticking into the deck within an inch or two of my head.

I sprang up and began to call loudly—in the dialect—to a number of Jaloon warriors on the bank of the river who had opened, so to put it, fire on me. By the simple process of exploding a few fireworks—a job lot I had picked up at Lokoko—I contrived to engage the friendly and curious interest of those poor but bloodthirsty heathen.

Even as I landed my wares on the river bank, I began to chant the praises of beer-engines and flashlights. There were some among those hideously over-armed warriors who scoffed at first, persisting in advancing their view that I be promptly perforated by their large spears. But the older—and wiser—men, attracted by my beer-engine, shook their heads.

"Nay," they said. "Let the stranger hold forth."

Quick to take a hint, my love, I held forth.

"Look well upon me, O ye warriors of Jaloon—look well and listen better! What is—has been—the drinking of beer hitherto but a mere ladling up of a liquid both flat and uninspiring in a large wooden dipper? Behold, I come among you with a device which shall transform your natural ale into nectar—cool, foaming, enlivening, appetizing and with a tang in it! Therefore be patient—wait and see. Take me unto the king—and handle me reverently, lest anon ye feel the weight of the king's hand!"

It was a queen they had, I learned later, but she was heavy-handed, at that. They understood—and proceeded to handle both

me and the beer-engine more—er—reverently, as requested.

But still, some of the younger, more inexperienced warriors murmured, dear heart. And so, in self-defence, I became more severe. I halted, producing from my pocket one of the flash-lights.

"Listen and take heed, O Jaloons!" I declaimed loudly. "There are bogies abiding in the backwoods—there are *jinn* in the jungle! Mark me well, who speaks, and who cannot lie! There are goblins in the glens; there are demons in the dark; and the glades are a-glimmer with the ghosts." Pretty good for non-moral extempore stuff, I think you will agree, pearl o' mine.

It was gloomy enough under the trees to give them at least an idea of electric light, and I produced a torch, aimed it at the old savage who seemed to be head of the party, and switched it on.

He jumped back from the ray ten feet if he jumped an inch. Most of his party jumped with him.

"Be not afraid," I said, and switched off. "The magic ray is not hostile to mankind. But against the demons of the words it is invincible. There is no demon yet invented that dares to face the White Ray, lest he be forever destroyed. . . . Enough! Lead me to the palace!"

They did it, Louise, as smartly and deferentially as if I had been their queen's betrothed—a fate which I narrowly escaped during the next week.

She was magnificently handsome, the queen, judged by Jaloon standards. But judged by any other standards she was less so—being peremptory in her manner, herculean in her physique, and severe in her tastes. Her scepter was a large battle-ax—which she handled with the absent-minded ease of a civilized woman handling a fan. She had killed lions with that ax, Louise. But as I pointed out to her,—civilly,—the finest axmanship in the world is vain against the *jinn* and *afreets* of the jungle. Magic was needed for these. She agreed.

I explained the virtues of the torches and begged to be permitted to present her with a large one. She graciously accepted it and bestowed on me a magnificent elephant tusk—not a bad beginning, you see, dear heart.

Next, I presented the chief witch-doctor with a small torch—a shilling one. He was so grateful that, in return, he presented me with his most treasured charm—a bladder made of snakeskin, containing a few dried peas, with a handle fashioned out of a foot or so of vertebrae—ordinary backbone, that is to say.

The ceremony of the Giving of Presents over, I begged permission to give Her Majesty just a rough notion of the principle and practice of the beer-engine. Beer, I explained, would be necessary. Thrilling with curiosity, she commanded practically the whole tribe to fall instantly to brewing. . . .

Three days later I had everything ready for a demonstration—an exhibition run—of the engine. A very large number of gallons were in a large wooden tank in a species of cellar below; the pipes were connected; and a rather charming little counter had been erected over the cellar and under the shade of a sheltering palm. I stood behind the counter, spruced up for the occasion, and over my head waved the Union Jack. A throne for Her Majesty had been erected close to the counter. The natives were in gala attire—where attired at all—and my friend the witch-doctor had got a sort of band of tom-tom players working pretty hard close by.

The Queen herself headed the procession from the palace—so to call it—across the courtyard to the beer-engine, put her ax on the counter, and took her seat on the throne.

I raised my hand for silence, took a horn tankard, held it under the tap, and impressively, even flourishingly, pulled the handle.

The beer gushed forth, sparkling in the sunshine.

"Wah!" An exclamation of awe, wonder and thirst burst from the multitude.

Bowing gracefully, I proffered the tankard to Her Majesty. She emptied it, and passed it back for re-filling.

"A better tankard of beer I never wish to taste," she said flatly, in the vernacular, and she believed every word she said. It was, of course, the usual native beer, but I had slicked it up a little with trade gin, and of course it had passed through the magic engine, which to the ignorant minds of the heathen Jaloons had transformed it—as I had stated to them it would—in to nectar.

The Queen had a few, presented me with two tusks of ivory and then retired to the palace to rest for a little while.

I drew a couple for the witch-doctor, and then he announced the opening of the business to the tribe. We had arranged his speech overnight. He kept it short. In effect it ran as follows:

"Tribesmen, the illustrious white wonder-worker desires me to announce that from this hour he is prepared to do business—for cash—at this spot which he has named the Old Flag Hotel. All beer supplied will pass through the Magic Engine. Customers will bring their own tankards. No credit will be given in any circumstances what-

ever. Ivory, gold-dust or nuggets, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, bricks of silver, and a limited number of well-cured skins will be accepted over the counter in payment. Nothing else goes. I declare the Old Flag Hotel open. Friends, Jaloons and fellow-citizens, go to it! Good health, all!"

They went to it, Louise. . . .

The thing was a success from the start. Where they dug up the stuff to pay for their drinks only an old African expert like myself could guess. They were the richest lot of natives—rich in goods that were of no use to them, such as precious stones, I mean—I have ever come across; and I do not exaggerate, dear soul, when I say I've come across a few.

In a word, Louise, they lapped like lions—for cold cash. But mark you, my dear, I would allow no intemperance at the Old Flag, for I was determined to keep the thing as sweet and healthy as an unfortunately non-moral man could. I made it an inflexible rule that if any man exceeded his capacity, he should at once be carried to his hut by a couple of friends and there sleep until he could come again.

They literally could not tire of watching me make a magic pass, give the magic handle a magic pull, and bring the beer magically flowing forth.

At the end of the first day I had half a gallon of gold-dust, a quart of quite decent stones, several hundredweight of ivory, some fine skins, and a first-class rhinoceros horn for which I had let a poor hard-up devil have a half-pint.

Next day the Queen put a fatigue party on to brewing in order to keep the vat full. You perceive from that, my love, the true beauty of my scheme. They provided the beer; I provided the beer-engine and the bar. They paid for the use of the engine, and of course they got their beer free—gratis, so to express it. And everybody was charmed.

Late that night, just before closing time, my old friend the witch-doctor came swaggering through the gang which was chatting round the bar, with his electric torch full on, and said casually that he had been out in the jungle for a bit of a stroll. While out there, he

said, he had met a party of ring-tailed demons with fiery eyes led by a six-horned double-tailed faceless *jinni*! They pursued him the instant they caught sight of him, as was their habit.

The merry, care-free crowd were silent in a second, Louise; and the glances of terror which they began to cast into the surrounding darkness would have touched a harder heart than mine. They listened with all their ears, too. He told a good story, the doctor—full of movement, action



He stopped, turned and flashed it on his fearful pursuers. They fled.

and human interest. He worked it up to the point where, footing it for dear life, with that ravening herd of supernatural false-alarms gnashing their teeth at his heels, it suddenly occurred to him: "Why run—with one of the illustrious wonder-worker's white-ray throwers in my pouch?"

He told them how he took it out, stopped, turned and flashed it on his fearful pursuers. He paused there—dramatically, as I thought, beloved.

"What happened?" bawled the wrought-up tribe simultaneously. All of them had had similar experiences—or thought they had. It comes of looking too frequently over your shoulder in the dark.

"They fled, howling with fear," said the witch-doctor, with a contemptuous laugh.

The silence of amazement that followed was broken by the sound of my opening a case of the torches.

I do not seriously exaggerate, when I say that in ten minutes, Louise, I had practically sold out—for a fortune. For the beginnings of a fortune.

The tribe going home to their huts that night looked like a swarm of large fireflies. He was a sound fellow, the old witch-doctor. I did not grudge him his commission—a pair of braces with metal fittings. He wore them forked down over his head, passing behind his ears, and tied under his chin in a bow, with two ends sticking up from the top of his head like horns. They were of more use to him that way, he maintained. . . .

Well, there I was—owner of a business that promised to make me a millionaire in three months—the fruits of a little real enterprise.

But it was not to be, dearest of all. The Fates had a string tied to it—as I might have known. So far I had swept all obstacles out of my path. Now I was to be swept—and right swiftly at that.

Naturally, I slept late after my Titanic labors of the opening day. Who, may I ask, would not, beloved?

And when at last I did wake, and crawled out from under the bar—naturally, I slept with my priceless beer-engine under my pillow, so to describe it,—I found myself face to face with a white woman whose aspect was of a severity calculated to turn one's blood sour in one's veins. She was dressed like a man, and she carried man-sized revolvers, one of which she thrust into my face.

"What are you doing here with my natives, you human bean-pole?" she demanded.

I think I kept my nerve, Louise. It is my custom so to do—for my life has so often depended on it.

"Pardon me, madam—*your* natives? I venture to suggest to you, with great emphasis, that I found them first!"

She sneered, Louise—sneered at me.

"*You!* Found them first! Why, you extension ladder, you couldn't find the Atlantic Ocean if you were drowning in it! I tell you, Mister, these natives were first found by me a month ago. I left them temporarily, in their innocence, while I went back to get stocked up with goods suitable for trading with them. I come back here with a cargo of first-class trade-goods for them, and here I find you littering up the place. Keep still, or I'll shoot you clean out of sight! . . . What's all this?"

She rapped her revolver on the bar.

"This is the Old Flag Hotel, madam," I said, I think with dignity. "And this," I added satirically, "is a beer-engine—the only one on the Coast."

"Huh, I see it."

She was as quick as she was unbeautiful. She saw the possibilities of the beer-engine in a flash. She thought hard for a moment; then she lowered her revolver.

"Yes, I see. It's a good idea, Walter." Why she called me Walter, I have never yet been able to understand—never, love.

She thought for a moment longer, then strode off to the palace.

I drew myself a pint to steady my shaken nerves and then hurried across to the witch-doctor's hut. I woke him and explained.

"Get busy, Doctor—there is competition threatening us. She's gone to see the Queen."

He was quick on the uptake for a witch-doctor, and slipping on his full-dress necklace of knuckle-bones and

other badges of office, he nipped across to the palace—so to describe it. He was back in twenty minutes with the news that the lady of the revolvers was leaving Jaloan forthwith. He was what they call a fast little worker, and naturally I was charmed at this quick sweeping-out of the severe newcomer. I took the witch-doctor to the bar and was hospitable to him. We saw the lady trader leave the palace and hurry back to her boat. She did not even look in the direction of the Old Flag Hotel.

The witch-doctor and I celebrated her departure in the customary way. The tribe began to wake up and drop in at the hotel; the sun rose; the birds sang; the beer-engine worked; and the cash came in. Everything went well, day and

night. The tribe, freed at last from their superstitious terrors, was like a happy family.

So, my love, it went for the next ten days, when I noticed that the receipts were falling slightly but surely, and the general enthusiasm for me seemed a little to be abating. I mentioned it to my friend the witch-doctor.

"Yes, I've noticed it myself," he said. "It's due to their natural laziness. They are getting tired of hunting for the jewels and gold-dust. There's a nasty spirit growing up among them. I mentioned it only last night to

"What are you doing here with my natives, you human bean-pole?" she demanded.



the Queen. 'There is quite a number of them,' I told her, 'whose one ambition seems to be free beer! And it's a fallacy, Your Majesty. There never has been free beer and there never will be. If the tribe insists on drinking like fishes, they must expect to pay for it!' Her Majesty agreed."

I was glad to know that the Government, so to express it, had its finger on the pulse of the situation.

SOME two or three days later I had a slight touch of fever which laid me up for a day or so. I got a few drugs from my friend the witch-doctor—good strong drugs that put me to sleep for twenty-four hours. I was awakened from that healing slumber at about half-past three in the morning by the sound of a motor engine running somewhere over by the palace. It was so unusual—so unexpected—that I leaped from my bed under the bar with my revolver ready for instant use.

But I was too late—I had been double-crossed. That woman had returned, and had all the trumps in her hand.

At that hour it should have been pitch-dark, and all the Jaloons should have been indoors and asleep with their flash-lights ready to hand in case of devils coming out of the jungle. But it was not so. I give you my word, Louise, the place was lit up like a civilized town.

From a tall pole erected by the palace hung an arc-light like a full moon. It lit up the village like a theater. Not far off between two poles hung one of those wine-merchants' occulting electric signs that continually flashed on and off the following gap-toothed advertisements:

GU NNESS
BASS
WO TH NGTON
JOHN IE W LK R

and near to that, hung on to a eucalyptus tree, was a smaller sign which intermittently flashed out in bilious, green letters—

TAKE BE CH MS
P LLS
WORTH A GUINEA A BOX

In the glare of these lights—obviously a lot of junk picked up cheap with a small engine and dynamo, at some trading-station along the coast—I saw standing at a huge trestle table the lady of the revolvers, and two of the toughest-looking white ruffians I had ever seen.

On the table and all about them were—what do you think, Louise? Soda siphons!

Even as I stared, the woman began to address the tribe in quite good Jaloos.

"Your Majesty, ladies and gentlemen," she bawled raucously, in effect, "you are now witnessing in full working order an installation of the most modern and up-to-date devil-scaring apparatus ever invented! It will be apparent to the meanest intelligence that compared with this installation the pitiful, futile and shamefully expensive little portable demon-scarers planted on you by the disolute confidence-trickster over at his miserable public bar are worse than useless. You have been paying about five thousand per cent too high for your protection, friends. No longer will it be necessary to hand that lank-legged four-flusher at the hotel twenty ounces of gold-dust for a rotten little half-expired refill. For with the Government's permission, I and my two miracle-men propose to put this installation at the service of the community free of individual charge in return for an annual rate to be levied on the community. You can judge for yourselves whether the installation is likely to scare off the pluckiest demon in the district! In any case, we

personally guarantee it. The annual rate will be low—a bushel of diamonds, emeralds and rubies, and say, half a ton of gold-dust per annum paid in advance! Is that agreed?"

The tribe yelled themselves hoarse accepting.

"And now," continued the creature, "for another announcement: Why continue to pay half a pint of jewels for a quart of your own beer? Why be gypped out of your money for sake of seeing your own beer shot through a cheap beer-engine picked up at some junk dealer's down the coast? Why not own your own beer-engine—dainty, compact, portable, efficient and cheap?"

She lifted one of the siphons—they were quite obviously a cheap lot of soda-making machines, no doubt exported by some Continental firm—filled it with beer, screwed on the small cylinder containing the gas, punctured it, and a second later she was squirting aerated beer into a glass for the Queen. Probably it was awful to drink—native beer is awful anyway. But I confess that it looked very effective, my love.

The poor mutts went mad about it. Everybody wanted one—but all were short of ready money. I had that.

She announced the price of the gasogenes—and noticing that the figure rather daunted them, she made a suggestion so mean, so low, so intolerably vulgar and unsporting that I could have blushed for her.

"If you are short," she said, "why don't you go and take back the money which has been extorted from you by that Shylock-souled fire-escape at the Old Flag? Her Majesty will approve!"

The Queen nodded, and I woke from the spell which the strange scene had cast upon me. I heard the woman's raucous yell of triumph, and her cry to her partner:

"Fine! Switch on the red sign in honor of the Queen, Jim!"

Instantly there flashed out on the African night the following sign:

E M E R G E N C Y E X I T

It was like a hint from above.

I made the swiftest emergency exit on record, Louise. I reached my boat about six jumps ahead of the ungrateful hounds, cut the rope and was whirled into safety and darkness by the rushing current in an instant. But alas, my treasure was back at the Old Flag. The only thing I saved was myself.

APPARENTLY overcome by the sad memory of his defeat, Captain Cormorant drooped his head in an unconscious attitude of dejection so profound that his wife was alarmed. She rose and firmly rang for another bottle of champagne. The Captain looked up. He straightened his shoulders, beaming at her.

"Yes, best beloved, as I say, the only thing I saved was myself. For a long time I wondered whether even that was worth while."

He reached for the cigar-box. Little Mrs. Louise looked at him eagerly. "And was it, Lester?"

The Captain rose.

"Can you ask, dear heart? Can you ask a man in my circumstances such a question? A million times over it was worth it!"

He knelt down on the hearthrug beside her, slipped an arm round her, and drew her unresisting form to him.

"God forgive me—moral-less, friendless (except for one great-souled little lady) bit of flotsam that I am, I am the happiest husband in the world."

He snapped his fingers at that far-off treasure in Jaloos. "And I am the happiest wife, Lester. . . . And I just adore your stories."

The Black Whisper

By SEVEN ANDERTON

Illustrated by Joseph Maturo

ON a dimly lighted side street a huge and powerful car stood at the curb, a touring car with the top up and without side curtains. Three men besides the driver sat in the car. They were an evil-looking lot, and they sat in grim silence with eyes staring steadily through the early winter darkness toward Milwaukee Avenue, a block distant. The driver's foot rested lightly on the starter. The other three gripped sub-machine-guns—"choppers"—that lay across their laps. They were waiting to burn a man down.

Their intended victim would soon step from a street-car at the corner of Milwaukee Avenue and the side street on which the killers waited. In walking the two blocks to his home, the victim would pass the parked car—or rather come abreast of it. Later, his bullet-riddled body would be picked up on the sidewalk and taken to the morgue. That was the plan.

The man for whom the human beasts of prey waited was Lieutenant Bob Frazier, a veteran city detective. Gangland had tried in vain to "handle" Frazier. He had proved impossible to buy, frighten or frame. For fifteen years in the detective bureau, Bob Frazier had fought criminals with grim determination and unswerving purpose. Nothing could blind him to his duty or frighten him into neglecting it or resigning from the department. So, the evil-faced killers waited; their sputtering guns would remove the implacable foe of gangland.

"Get him good," had been the Big Shot's growled order to the picked crew who now waited. "Make him into hamburger!"

The butchers meant to carry out that order. In sixty seconds the triple stream of lead from those weapons on their laps would do the job. Then the car would roar away from the spot. It was a "hot boiler," stolen less than two hours before. It would be abandoned at a safe distance from the scene of the murder, and the killers would scatter to various underworld haunts. Alibis for all four—airtight alibis—had already been arranged.

"He oughta been here before now," growled one of the gangsters in the rear seat.

"Take it easy," answered the one beside the driver. "He probably stopped in a store on the Avenue to buy somethin' he'll never eat."

The waiting killers knew that their quarry had left Headquarters and boarded a street-car at ten minutes of seven o'clock. It was now fifteen minutes past seven and the street-car ride should have taken a scant twenty minutes. Silence fell again as the gunmen watched the Avenue. The next street-car which stopped would probably disgorge the doomed detective.

Two girls, carrying bundles, came along. They were talking and laughing as they passed on the opposite side of the street from the death car. Then they entered an apartment house and the side street was once more quiet and deserted.

Then from the drive that ran alongside another apartment house a figure emerged and moved swiftly toward the parked auto. The figure was slender and clad in a

dark suit. The shirt was black; so were the rubber-soled "sneakers" on the man's feet and the felt hat whose brim was pulled low. A black silk scarf was tied across the face, covering it from the eyes down.

The black figure moved with the noiselessness of a phantom as it dodged swiftly from the drive and made its way to the rear of the lurking death car. Having reached the car without being seen or heard, the figure crouched in the blacker shadow and became motionless. It would have taken cat eyes to have spotted the crouching form from a distance of more than a few yards.

"Here comes the damned dick," growled the man beside the driver. "Get set!"

Silhouetted against the light from the avenue a tall, bulky figure could be seen striding along the sidewalk. It was the man the gangsters were waiting to "make into hamburger." Steadily the detective approached the place where ghastly death waited.

"This'll be a cinch," muttered the man beside the driver. "Not another soul near. When I open up, give him the works. Now keep still and be ready."

The detective, carrying a couple of packages, was now but half a block distant. There was a vacant lot across the sidewalk from where the car was parked. There was a billboard against which the killers meant to have their human target outlined when they opened fire.

Suddenly the masked figure stood erect and moved noiselessly from his hiding-place to the side of the car.

"Listen, you fellows," came a crisp whisper from behind the silk mask. "Don't move a hair if you want to live! I've put two jugs of nitro-glycerin under this car. Move it either forward or backward an inch—and it'll go up a mile. I've got another jug of the stuff in the hand I'm holding behind my back. If I happen to drop it, all three jugs will explode—so don't get me excited unless you want us all to go to hell together."

The masked man had spoken rapidly and yet the crisp whisper had been plain. It had carried a tone that convinced. The astonished gunmen sat as if frozen for the several moments it took the black-clad stranger to speak his piece. Now they saw that an automatic in the man's gloved right hand covered them. The left hand was held behind his back.

"Get your hands against the top, all of you, and be quick about it," came that ominous whisper from behind the mask, "or I'll see how many of you I can drill holes in before the nitro goes off!"

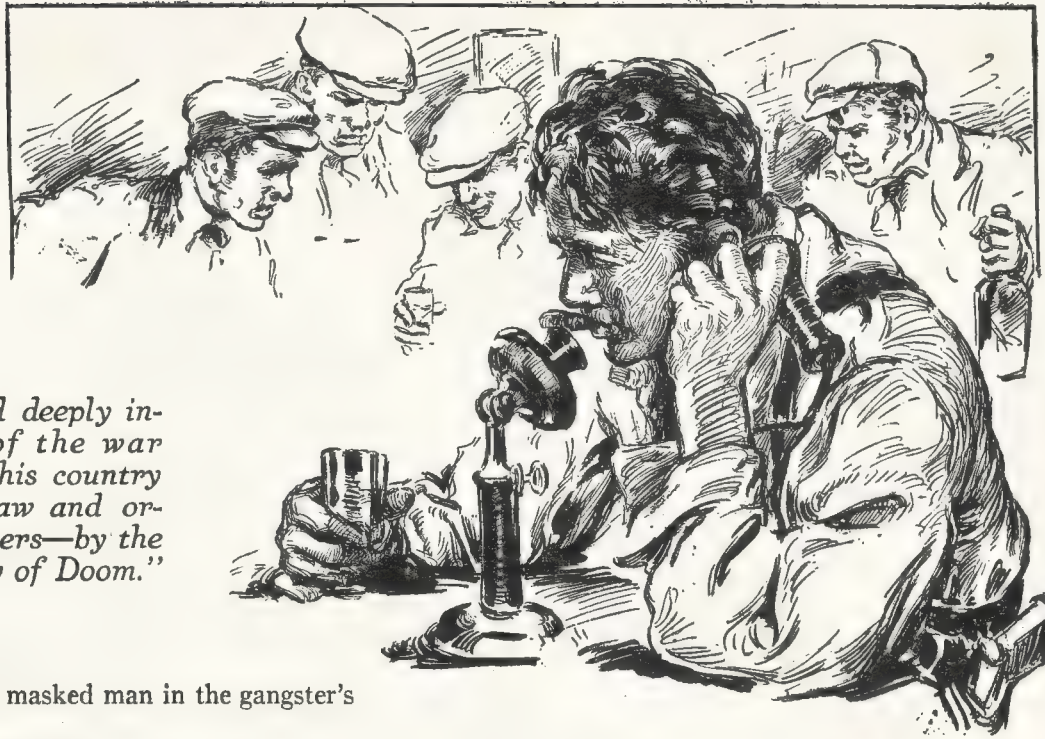
Eight hands went up against the top. Lieutenant Bob Frazier was now less than twenty yards distant. He had slowed his step and was peering through the gloom toward the parked car.

"You," whispered the masked one, prodding the killer in the front seat with the muzzle of his automatic. "Call Frazier over here."

"Hey, Frazier," called the gangster in a hoarse voice. "Come here a minute, will you?"

"Who are you?" called Bob Frazier, as he halted and drew his gun. He didn't like the looks of things.

"Just a minute," Tarvin snapped. "Who is the whispering mug with the nitro that gummed up the works last night?"



Another timely and deeply interesting drama of the war going on all over this country between forces of law and order and the racketeers—by the author of "The Day of Doom."

"Tell him," whispered the masked man in the gangster's car.

"Lefty Madgett," called the thug.

The big detective dropped the bundles he was carrying and a powerful flashlight appeared in his left hand. Its beam sought the car and Frazier saw the four gangsters sitting with lifted hands while the slender black-clad and masked figure beside the car covered them with an automatic. With leveled gun the detective strode forward.

"What's going on here?" demanded Frazier, halting some six feet from the group and holding the light on them steadily.

"Keep those fellows covered with your gun, Lieutenant," came the crisp whisper from behind the mask, "and I'll tell you—after I take a few little playthings out of their car. And I must tell you that this bottle I am holding contains nitro-glycerin. There are two more like it under the car. If the car moves, or I drop this bottle, you can imagine what will happen."

The detective's face paled and his form stiffened a bit. The masked man calmly reached into the car and removed the three machine-guns from the gangsters' laps. Frazier's eyes glittered as he saw the guns tossed onto the strip of sward between curb and sidewalk.

"Now, Frazier," came the sharp whisper, "you may step up and get their other guns. Be quick! Some one is coming from the avenue."

Frazier stepped forward. In another moment four automatics taken from holsters under the gangsters' arms, lay beside the machine-guns. Two men were approaching from the direction of Milwaukee Avenue.

"You'll have help in a minute, Lieutenant," whispered the masked man. "Then I'll leave. These gentlemen in the car were waiting here to empty those machine-guns into somebody. I'll let you guess who it was. The car they are in is stolen. You ought to be able to keep them in a safe place for a few days."

The astonishing stranger thrust his gun into one side pocket of his coat and the flask he had been holding in his left hand into the other. He stooped and quickly removed two more flasks from beneath the gangster car. The two approaching citizens were now but a dozen yards away. Another man had just come out of a house across the street.

"I'll be going now," whispered the masked one. "Take good care of your friends."

"Say," demanded the detective, keeping the gangsters covered with his guns, "is that really nitro, or—"

For answer the masked stranger calmly tossed the flask in his right hand over the billboard into the vacant lot. A moment later the darkness above the billboard flashed red. The bloody tint danced for a moment on bare limbs of trees and the brick walls of near-by buildings. There was a thunderous explosion and chunks of earth and other debris began to rain about the area.

With a lightning move the man behind the wheel of the gangster car stepped on the starter and his hand darted for the gear lever.

"Hands back in the air," came the sharp whisper of the masked man, "or I'll toss one of these under you!"

The gangster's hands went back above his head. Lieutenant Frazier, recovering from his start, ordered the hoodlums out of the car and was again covering them with his revolver.

"Watch your friends," the whisper of the masked man cut the silence. "And never doubt anything I tell you!"

"Hey—" shouted Frazier. But the masked one was darting away with the speed of a frightened deer. In another second he had disappeared into the drive from which he had come less than fifteen minutes earlier.

From among the citizens who gathered quickly Detective Frazier recruited help. Half an hour later the four gangsters with the captured guns and stolen car were safe at Headquarters. The hoodlums were locked up for the night in solitary cells and Lieutenant Frazier went into conference with his Chief, Eli Bohling.

"Hm-m-m," growled the Chief when he had listened to a detailed report of what had happened. "There aint any doubt why those buzzards were there with those hand-organs. They meant to rub you out. The mysterious guy with the nitro saved your life—this time. But your number is evidently up. Those killers are Bat Tarvin's men. We know that, but you know as well as I do that we'll never be able to do anything to Bat for it. We won't even be able to hold the gunmen for long. They'll be sprung quick and they'll beat the rap. They always do. And then—"

The Chief paused for a moment, his eyes boring into Frazier's. The detective met the gaze and said nothing.

"Frazier," resumed Bohling suddenly, "I'm going to send you on a long vacation; you have it coming. Your pay will go on. I want you to leave Chicago tonight. Have your wife follow, if she needs time to get ready. I don't want to attend your funeral for a long time yet."

"Thanks, Chief," answered Frazier evenly, "but I'm not going to run. I never have—and I'm too old to begin."

"Listen, Frazier," argued Bohling. "Try to realize what you are up against. Your number is up! If you stay in or near Chicago, your wife will be a widow before she is a week older. You—"

"Chief," interrupted Frazier, "you can fire me if you want to, but you can't make me leave town. I'm going to try to keep on living and trying to put a crimp in Bat Tarvin and his gang. If I die, I'd rather go wearing my shield. But that's up to you."

After a long moment of silence the Chief shrugged his shoulders. In his eyes there was admiration for the veteran officer's courage.

"All right, Bob," he growled. "Go ahead and wear your shield. I wish you more luck than I believe you'll have."

"Thanks, Chief," said Frazier, rising. "I'm going home now and get some sleep."

IN his downtown headquarters, an expensively furnished apartment on the top floor of a building he owned, Bat Tarvin sat in conference with two of his lieutenants. Bat was a gross individual of mongrel breed. He wore expensive, rather flashy clothes. His fleshy face did its best to mirror the evil soul of the man. It was a cruel and ruthless face; it told of dissipation, unbridled greed and a lust for power.

The two lieutenants were typical gangsters. One, Banty Mellon, was a runt in size and a dandy in dress. The other, Bones Lanphere, was a gaunt man of more than six feet in height, who was dressed carelessly. Both had the cold eyes and bleak face that mark the killer.

Bat Tarvin was commander in chief of the city's most powerful gang of racketeers. He had amassed millions of dollars by almost every brand of crime known. He had even invented a few new brands. He had gained power, not only in the underworld and gangland, but in political circles. Bribery, blackmail, intimidation and murder were his favorite weapons. He had but one rival for supremacy in gangland. This rival was known as Greek Tommy, and he was a foe worthy of Bat Tarvin's steel. For months there had been a truce between the two gangs. The two leaders had agreed on a split in territory and under the terms of the agreement each had bled his own territory and stayed out of the other's hunting-grounds. . . .

It was a little more than an hour since the whispering man in black had thwarted the bumping-off of Bob Frazier. Bat Tarvin had just cast aside a paper in which he had been rereading the account of what had happened to his gunmen. The newspaper had played up the part taken in the affair by the masked man in black. The writer of the paper's account had dubbed him "the Black Whisper," a sobriquet which was to stick. There was a black scowl on the gunman's face as he flung down the paper.

"There is something rotten as hell somewhere!" Tarvin growled at his lieutenants. "We've got to get that dick Frazier—and do it tonight."

"How?" inquired Bones Lanphere, lighting a cigarette. "He's over at Headquarters now," answered Tarvin. "I've got Smoky Leland tailing him. When he leaves there, Smoky will give us a buzz. Then you and Banty will beat it over to an apartment that I've had rented for

a month in case I should need it. It is the front apartment on the right—Number Two—in the building where Frazier lives on the third floor. There are two tommy-guns in the davenport. It's one of the kind that makes down for a bed. You fellows can wait in the apartment and pot Frazier through the front window as he comes home. There is a side window that opens into a drive leading back to the alley. You can make your lam that way. Better have your boiler parked at the mouth of the alley."

"That spot might get kinda hot," observed Banty Mellon, "if there happened to be many people around."

"That's why I had the boys try the other way," growled Tarvin. "Now we'll have to use the apartment. You'll have the tommy-guns. You can smoke your way out if you have to. Here is a couple of grand for each of you. When the job is done, you beat it for Meg's place at Waukegan. I've fixed it so there will be plenty of proof that you've been there since six o'clock tonight."

Tarvin tossed two thick rolls of bills across the table and each killer pocketed one of the rolls. Tarvin rose and went to a sideboard where he poured three stiff drinks of liquor and carried them back to the table. Just as the hoodlums finished the drinks the telephone rang. The racketeer chief answered, listened for a few moments, snapped up the receiver and turned to face the killers.

"Snap into it," he said, tossing a key to Bones Lanphere. "There's the key. That was Smoky on the wire. Frazier just left Headquarters in a taxi. You can beat him by more than five minutes, even if he goes straight home. You may have to rub out the taxi-driver, too. Get going!"

In a speedy roadster Bones and Banty raced toward their goal. They knew they had the advantage of eighteen blocks on the cab in which Lieutenant Bob Frazier was coming home—and they would make more speed.

They drove their roadster into the mouth of the alley which ran behind the building in which their intended victim lived. Then they hurried to the corner and walked swiftly to the entrance of the apartment building. The street was almost deserted. In the building Bones thrust the key into the lock of the door to Apartment Two. The door opened and Bones, with Banty at his heels, stepped into the dark room and fumbled on the wall for the light switch.

Suddenly a figure stepped noiselessly into the strip of light that shone into the room from the hall. It was the same masked man in black who had upset the earlier plans for Frazier's murder. In his hand the masked one held a weapon known as a blackjack. It was a long, narrow leather sack filled with shot—a deadly instrument in the hands of one who knows how to use it.

THERE was a sound between a gasp and a grunt as the blackjack came down with a soft thud on the head of Banty Mellon. Banty crumpled like an empty sack and pitched to the floor. Bones' fingers had found the switch and the lights flared on just as Banty went down. Bones whirled to find an automatic in the left hand of the masked man pressed into his middle. The black silk mask was within two feet of the gangster's face. With a quick kick the masked man closed the door.

"Stand steady," came a sharp, clear whisper from behind the mask, "and reach for the ceiling."

Bones' hands went up and the stranger quickly removed an automatic from its holster under the thug's left arm.

"The Black Whisper!" muttered the gangster, his eyes fixed on the silk mask.

"Now lie down on your face and cross your wrists behind your back," hissed the man in black.

Bones obeyed. From a pocket the masked man drew

some short lengths of cotton rope. He bound the captive's wrists and then the ankles; then he drew the ankles up and tied them to the wrists. He then pocketed his gun and bound the unconscious Banty in the same manner.

"If you make any noise," whispered the captor, "I'll shut you up with this black-jack."

There was the sound of an automobile stopping before the apartment building. The man in the mask stepped to the door and opened it slightly. A moment later Lieutenant Bob Frazier strode into the hallway. The masked man opened the door wide and stood calmly in the opening. In his hand he held a flask of pale fluid.

"Hello, Frazier," he greeted in a loud whisper.

The detective stopped and whirled to face the whisperer. His hand darted toward his hip.

"Easy!" warned the masked one, lifting the flask slightly. "Come in here for a moment, please. I've got a couple of presents for you."

With a grunt Frazier followed the mysterious stranger into Apartment Two. He paused, frowning, as his eyes rested on the bound gangsters.

"These birds were going to pump lead into you from one of those front windows when you drove up," whispered the masked one. "I interfered a little with the proceedings. You'll find the machine-guns they intended to use in the davenport over yonder."

"Say," began Frazier. "What—"

"Wait," interrupted the whisperer. "Come with me."

In the kitchenette of the apartment the masked man closed the door. He snapped on a light and faced the detective. He was again holding the pint flask of pale liquid carelessly in his left hand.

"Listen, Frazier," came his whisper. "I wish you'd clear out of this town for a little while. I've got other things to do besides keep Bat Tarvin's killers from slaughtering you. It will make my job easier if you'll go away for a couple of weeks."

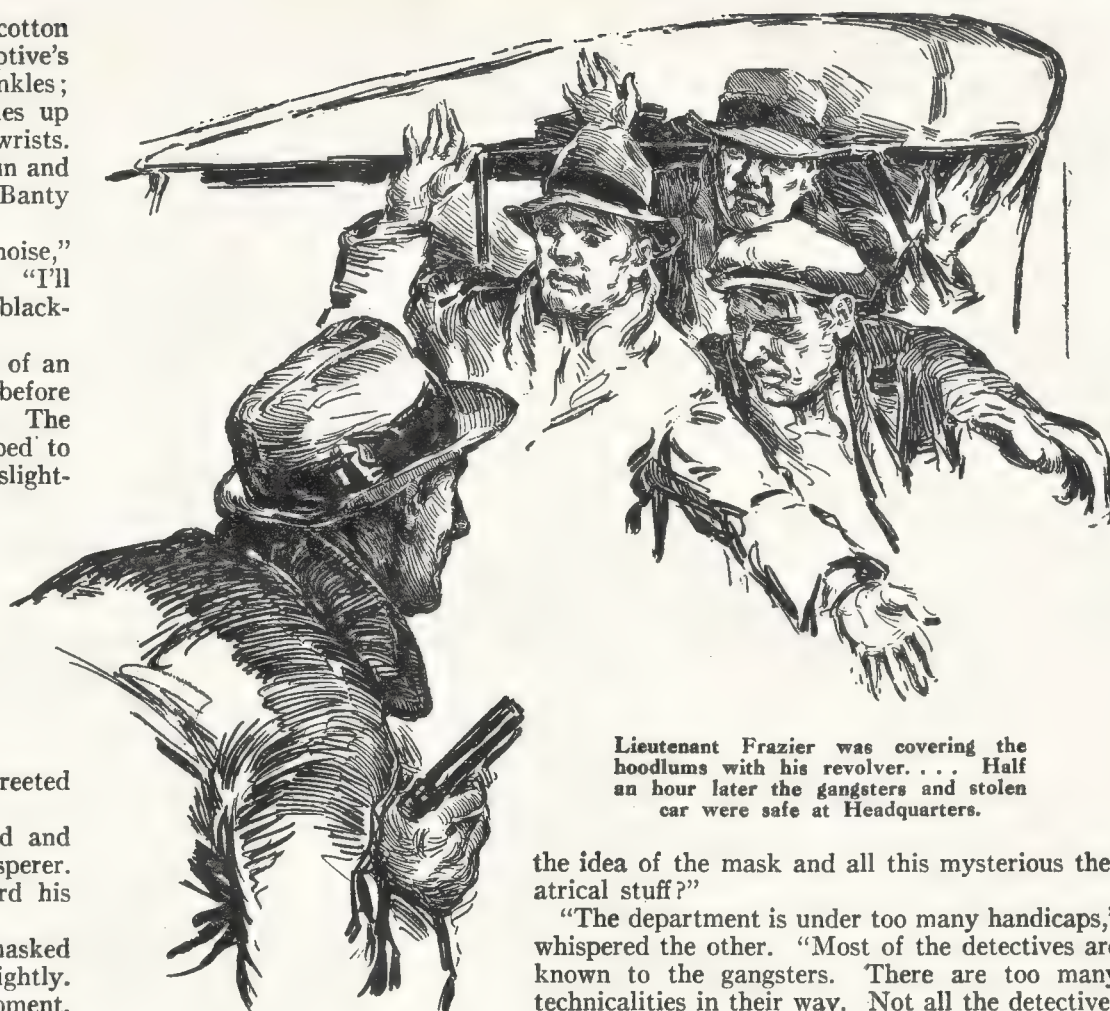
"Who the devil are you?" snapped Frazier. "And what is your job? Why are you taking so much trouble to save my hide?"

"You may find out who I am some day," came the whisper, "but not now. You know what I carry in these flasks. If I slip up before my job is done, my remains will be very hard to identify."

"What is this job?"

"I'm going to clean the gangsters and racketeers of Bat Tarvin and Greek Tommy out of this town," answered the whisperer. "Have you any objections?"

"Not a damned one," growled the detective. "If you can do that I'll help you. So will the force. But what's



Lieutenant Frazier was covering the hoodlums with his revolver. . . . Half an hour later the gangsters and stolen car were safe at Headquarters.

the idea of the mask and all this mysterious theatrical stuff?"

"The department is under too many handicaps," whispered the other. "Most of the detectives are known to the gangsters. There are too many technicalities in their way. Not all the detectives and cops are as square as you are. And there is no way of telling which have been bought or scared off by the racketeers. I've got a better way—and I'll play my hand alone. You can help most if you'll do as I suggested and take a trip. Promise me that you'll take these killers in the other room down to Headquarters, turn them over to the Chief and leave town from there. Stay two weeks. That's all I ask."

"And if I refuse?" inquired Frazier.

"I will have to kidnap you and put you away in a safe place for the duration of the emergency," was the whispered answer. "I should think you'd prefer a trip. Promise me you'll go."

"Hm-m-m," murmured Frazier. "And if I do?"

"There'll be nobody gunning for you when you come back," was the whispered answer. "I can promise you that."

"I'll deal with you," declared Frazier, after a brief silence. "I can hardly do anything else after what you've done for me tonight—and what you say you'll do if I refuse. But I'd sure like to be in on the killing."

"Maybe you can be," whispered the other. "If you'll go where I tell you and stick close to the telephone, I may give you a ring or send you a wire."

"Where do I go?"

"Leave Headquarters in a cab," answered the whisper. "Say you are going home. When you have ridden a few blocks change the order and have the driver take you to Evanston. Take the North Shore to Milwaukee. Register at the Pfister Hotel as Roger Williams—and stay close to your room."

"You're on," nodded Frazier. The veteran detective was no coward, but he realized how narrowly he had missed death twice in the past two hours. Also he was "sold".



"Easy!" warned the masked one, lifting his flask slightly. "Come in here for a moment, please. I've got a couple of presents for you."

on the whispering stranger. "But let me in on the scrap if there is any chance," he added.

"Now, one more thing," whispered the other. "Stay in this room five minutes by your watch after I leave. Those birds out there won't get away."

Frazier nodded and the masked man stepped from the kitchen and closed the door on the detective. He walked to the bound gangsters and searched them swiftly. From each he took a thick roll of bills which he casually thrust into his own pocket. Then he opened the door a crack and peering out to make sure the coast was clear, he stepped into the hall, jerked the mask from his face and hurried from the building.

At half-past nine, Bob Frazier again sat in conference with Chief Bohling. Bones Lanphere and Banty Mellon had been locked up and the machine-guns found in the davenport put away with the other captured weapons. Frazier had finished a detailed report of the evening's second adventure.

"Your whispering friend seems to mean business," grunted the Chief. "By thunder, I wish him well! He is right about the department, much as I hate to admit it. There are plenty of square cops and detectives, but how to tell the sheep from the goats has me up a tree. He didn't tell you anything about his plans?"

"Not a thing."

"Have you any idea who he is?"

"None."

"Well, I'm darned glad he talked you into leaving town," observed Bohling. "That'll take a load off my mind. I'll

do my darnedest, but you know as well as I do that these six guys you brought in will be sprung before tomorrow night."

"I'm afraid you're right," Frazier nodded. "Well, I'll be on my way."

"Good luck!" said the Chief, as the veteran detective departed.

It was fifteen minutes to ten when the telephone in Bat Tarvin's apartment rang. Tarvin was alone, waiting for the report of Bob Frazier's death. He picked up the instrument and answered. The girl at the switchboard told him a woman was calling him. The woman would not give her name, but insisted that the call was important.

"Put her on the wire," snapped Tarvin.

The gang chieftain was not afraid of the girl on the switchboard. She was the moll of one of his henchmen. Tarvin owned the apartment house, and every apartment in it was occupied by trusted members of his mob.

"Hello—Tarvin?" came a feminine voice over the wire.

"Yes," growled Bat. "Who are you?"

"I'll tell you that some other time," answered the voice. "I'm going to wise you up to something. Greek Tommy is out to get you. It was him that framed the trick on your men tonight when they

tried to get Frazier. Frazier has sold out to Tommy and Tommy is looking out for him. The reason I'm telling you this is that Tommy done me dirt and I've let him think he got away with it. I'm in a spot where I can keep you wised up on what Tommy is up to—and I'll stay there and watch out for you, if you'll do the right thing by me. How about it?"

"Listen, sister," snapped Tarvin. "If you do me any good, you won't lose. All you've told me now may be a lotta bologny."

"Yeah?" answered the voice. "Well, I'll tell you something else. Just a little while ago I heard Tommy say that you had sent two more guys to bump off Frazier. I could tell you the names of the two guys, but I guess you don't want me to. Tommy said the last two would soon be in the jug with the other four."

"Huh," grunted Bat. "I don't make you, sister; and I don't know what you are talking about."

"I get you," answered the woman. "You're thinking maybe this is a frame by the dicks to get you to admit something. Forget it! I'm on the level with you."

"Go on," said Bat, a glitter in his eye. "Tell me some more funny stories."

"All right," answered the girl. "I'll spill you one more batch of info, but that will be all until I get some mazuma to show me that you'll play fair with me. Tommy knows that Pete Gaston is out collecting tonight from the North Side speakeasies. He knows Pete is to bring the bundle to your place. Tommy's men are going to hijack Pete and grab the boodle."

"Say," demanded Tarvin sharply, "how does—how does anybody know so much about my private business?"

"I could tell you that too," answered the woman, "but I want some sugar first."

"How do you figure on getting it?"

"You'll get a message from me in about an hour," answered the voice. "Watch for it. And you'd better look out for Pete Gaston, if you want to save that jack he's collecting."

There was the sound of a receiver clicking into the hook. With a muttered curse, Tarvin set down his own instrument. He produced a black notebook from an inner pocket and presently was calling one number after another over the phone. He was trying to locate Pete Gaston, his collector who was making the round of the speakeasies. If all went well, Pete should show up at the apartment before long with about eight thousand dollars.

WHILE Tarvin talked to the woman who had called with the alleged tip-offs, Pete Gaston, his collector, stepped from a car which had rolled up to the curb before Limpy Joe's blind pig on North Wells Street. The car was driven by a lean-faced gunman with sharp black eyes, who was chauffeur and bodyguard for Pete on the collection tours. Limpy Joe's joint was entered from the rear. Pete Gaston stepped across the dirty sidewalk and pushed through a narrow gate in a high board fence that blocked the narrow passage between the building which housed Limpy's place and the one next door. The passage was lighted dimly by a single weak bulb which hung above a door near the rear of the building on the left. The gate opened inward and then swung on spring hinges behind Pete Gaston.

As the gate swung shut, a figure which had been standing against the fence where the opening gate concealed him from Gaston's view, took one swift, silent step and a blackjack came down with a soft thump on the collector's head. Pete Gaston crumpled and the slender man in the black mask caught the falling form and eased it to earth. The Black Whisper had struck again!

Swiftly the deft hands of the masked man searched the pockets of the unconscious gangster and found what they sought. A fat wallet dropped into a side pocket of the black coat. On almost noiseless feet, the masked man raced down the narrow passage and went, with the ease of a cat, up and over another high board fence which closed the rear end of the passage. He dropped lightly to the ground in the alley which lay behind the fence, and darted away in the darkness.

Several minutes passed and then two of Limpy Joe's patrons, rather tipsy, emerged from the door above which the light bulb hung. They stopped in astonishment as they beheld the figure lying sprawled in the path. Their exclamations brought the gunman-chauffeur and they found themselves making explanations at the muzzle of an ugly automatic.

The gunman forced them to pick up the unconscious Gaston and carry him into Limpy's place. There the two men were searched and Limpy testified to the fact that they had only left the joint a couple of minutes before.

It so happened that one of the men who had discovered Gaston lying in the alley was a newspaper reporter. He had slipped over from the Chicago Avenue police station, where he was on duty, to have a couple of drinks at Limpy Joe's. The newspaper man shed most of his tipsiness and became acutely interested. He recognized Gaston and knew in what capacity the hoodlum served Tarvin.

While the chauffeur was trying to make up his mind what to do next, the telephone rang and Bat Tarvin asked Limpy Joe if Gaston had been there yet. Limpy beckoned the chauffeur to the phone. The fellow told his chief what had happened and was profanely told to bring Gaston and come to Tarvin's apartment as soon as the collector regained consciousness.

The racketeer boss was striding up and down the floor in a fury when Gaston and his driver entered the apartment. He poured and tossed off a stiff drink of liquor and then listened to the stories of the pair. Gaston had been robbed of more than six thousand dollars. He had collected from all but two of the places on his route.

"But all—" began Tarvin. The ringing of the telephone cut him off. He barked an answer.

"Hello, Chief," came a voice over the wire. "This is Smoky. I just found out that Bob Frazier brought Bones and Banty down and had 'em locked up about an hour ago. Frazier has gone back home."

"All right," snarled Tarvin, banging up the receiver. "By God, this is too much!" he cried, whirling on his two henchmen. He told them with much profanity what Smoky had reported and added information about the two attempts on Frazier's life that had been foiled.

"I think I've kinda got a line on what is back of this," concluded Tarvin. "And there's going to be plenty trouble for somebody! For one thing, Frazier has sold out to somebody—and it aint me. You know what—"

The telephone rang again. Tarvin answered. The girl at the switchboard informed him that a messenger-boy was calling with a letter.

"Send him up," growled Tarvin.

When the boy tapped at the door, Tarvin opened it, grabbed the messenger-boy by the shoulder and dragged him into the room. He snatched the letter from the lad's hand and ripped it open while he ordered the boy to wait until he had read the message.

There was a single page. The message, written in a clear, feminine hand, read:

Tarvin:

Send a grand to me tomorrow. Put it in a plain envelope and address it to Polly Valentine care of general delivery. Mail it so I'll get it tomorrow afternoon. When I get the sugar, I'll call you up and give you some more info.

There was no signature. Tarvin thrust the message into his pocket and whirled upon the half-frightened boy.

"Where did you get this?" demanded the racketeer.

"A skirt—a lady come into the office and give it to me," answered the lad. "She give me a dollar and said you'd give me another when I delivered it."

"What sort of looking girl?" snapped Tarvin.

"A swell looker," answered the boy. "Big brown eyes and black hair. Nifty clothes—kinda greenish color."

"Would you know her if you saw her again?"

"Yeah, sure."

Tarvin produced a bill and thrust it into the boy's hand.

"What hours do you work?" asked the gangster.

"Two o'clock until midnight," answered the boy, "but I don't have to go back to the office. The boss told me I could go home from here."

"O. K.," said Tarvin. "Go on home and come back here at noon tomorrow. I want you to do something for me before you go to work."

THE boy pocketed the five-dollar note and promised to report the following noon.

"Now," said Tarvin to the two gangsters when the boy was gone, "you fellows go get some sleep. Be here at eleven o'clock in the morning. I'm going to sleep here tonight; got to get up early and get Greenspun busy springing the boys Frazier pinched tonight. That damned dick better have a good laugh quick. He won't be able to laugh long."

It was about fifteen minutes past three A. M. when the clamor of the telephone in his apartment awakened Bat Tarvin. He swore as he tumbled out of bed, switched on the lights and answered the call.

"It's that same dame, Bat," said the girl at the switchboard. "She says it's important."

"Hook her on," growled the racketeer.

"Hello—Tarvin?" inquired the voice of the caller.

"Yes. What do you want?"

"I'm a busy girl tonight," answered the voice. "I just found out that Tommy's whispering friend is going to hijack your tavern. You'd better get on the job. Tommy is having a good laugh over the six grand he got from Gaston."

"Say," snapped Tarvin, "what—"

"I can't talk any more now," cut in the girl's voice. "Here comes Tommy. Call you later. Don't forget my sugar in the mail tomorrow."

There was the click of the severed connection. Tarvin swore fervently. Then he flashed the girl at the switchboard and told her to ring the tavern quickly. It was a night-club and cabaret known as the Tarvin Tavern, and one of Bat's chief sources of income. Located on the outskirts of the city, it enjoyed a large patronage; the "take" for a single night often ran over five thousand dollars.

While waiting for an answer to his call, Tarvin looked at his watch. Twenty minutes past three. The tavern closed promptly at three. There should still be some of the help there, even if Shag Malone, the manager, had finished his check-up and left with the night's proceeds.

"No answer out there," came the voice of the switchboard girl. "Central says the wire seems to be dead."

"Damn!" cried Tarvin, his face going a shade paler. "Wake up Buck Kistler. Tell him to get the car out in a hurry. I'll be down as soon as I can dress."

Tarvin set down the telephone and dashed to his bedroom where he began to dress hurriedly. Before he had finished his toilet, however, there was a rap at the door.

"Who is it?" called Bat, emerging from the bedroom.

"Shag," answered a voice outside the door.

Tarvin opened the door and admitted Shag Malone, manager of the Tarvin Tavern, and three other evil-faced gunmen.

"What's the trouble?" demanded Tarvin as the four hoodlums came into the room.

"This Black Whisper guy stuck us up and took the night's dough away from us," answered Malone.

"Where in hell were your guns?" snarled Tarvin. "Why do I pay three rods to stick along while you get that jack down to the night bank?"

"Listen, Bat," answered the tavern manager. "We didn't have a chance. The first thing we knew that bozo was standing right there by us. We had just stepped out of the joint and was going toward the curb. I had the mazuma in a canvas sack. This whisper guy stepped up to us with a bottle of nitro in each hand. He didn't even have a rod. He whispered for us to drop the sack and stand with our hands in the air—or he'd drop the nitro and blow all of us to hell."

"Lotta nerve you birds got," snarled Bat. "How much was in the sack?"

"Forty-eight hundred," answered Malone. "And we got nerve enough, but there aint no sense in committing suicide! That guy is crazy or awful desperate. I tell you he didn't even have a gat. He just stood there with the two flasks of juice and said that if we didn't want to drop the coin and our rods, we could all go to hell with him."

"You've been reading the stuff in the fool newspapers," growled Bat. "Well, get to bed. Be up here in the morning at eleven o'clock. I'm going to put a stop to this monkey business. One of you go down and tell Buck Kistler that I won't need him. He can go back to bed."

The morning papers were full of the night's exploits of the Black Whisper. Here was a figure to conjure with, and newswriters made the most of the offered opportunity. He was pictured as the Nemesis of gangland, a romantic figure who had no fear of death—who was willing to die

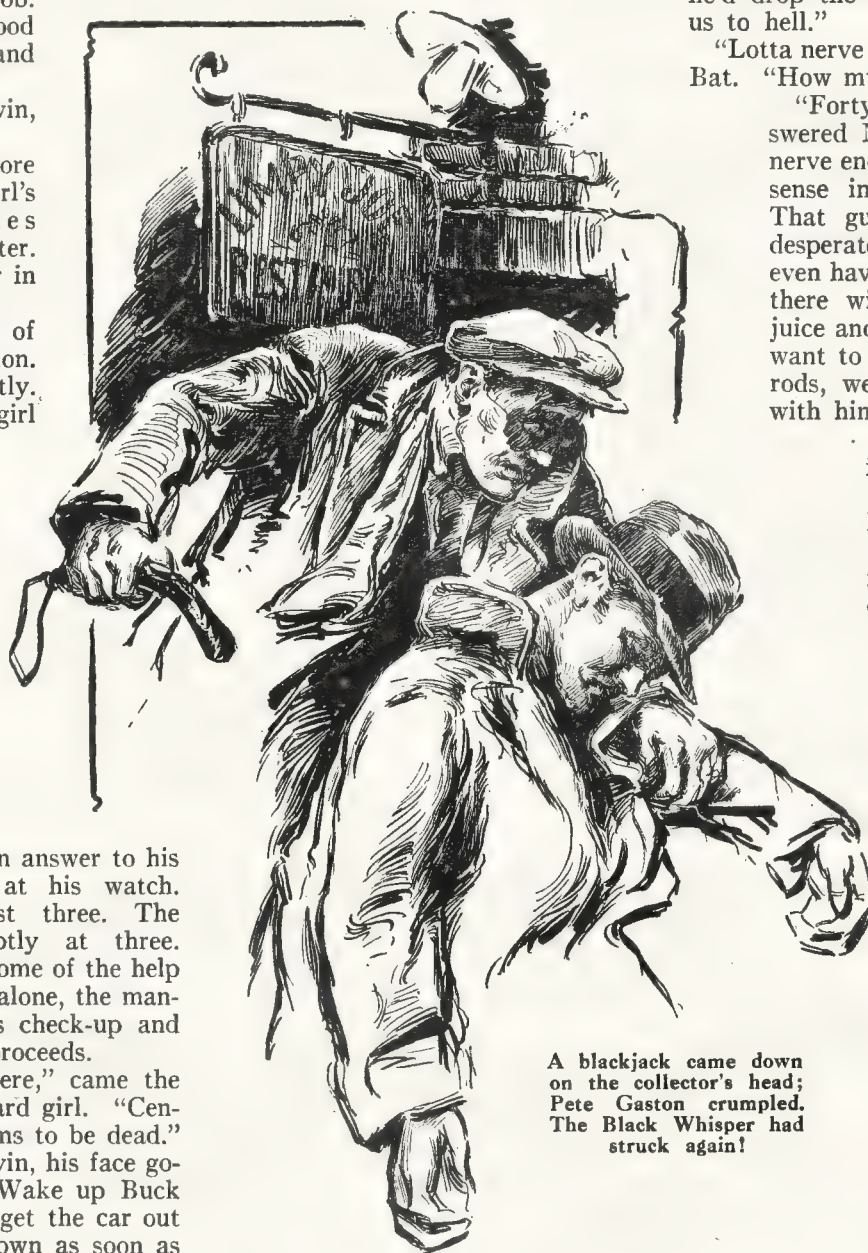
at any time, provided he could take with him across the Styx the men who dared to disobey his orders.

Newspaper estimates of the sum taken from gangland during the night by the Black Whisper ranged from ten thousand to fifty thousand. Many weird conjectures were advanced as to the identity of the newcomer who whispered his strange commands from behind a silken mask.

The city was agog—and newspaper men were temporarily happy. The same could not be said of gangland.

Early on the morning after the début of the Black Whisper, Arnold Greenspun, one of the city's most famous criminal lawyers, was busy securing the release of the six killers who had failed in their attempts to get Bob Frazier.

Greenspun was clever, unprincipled, and had grown rich



A blackjack came down on the collector's head; Pete Gaston crumpled. The Black Whisper had struck again!

through his ability to accomplish just such tasks. This morning he worked with more than his usual energy. At ten-thirty the six gangsters walked out of jail, admitted to bond which had been promptly supplied. It was now up to Greenspun to see that their cases did not come to trial. That would take more time, but his first object had been achieved.

The six killers, obeying a message delivered by the lawyer, went directly to the downtown apartment of their chief. There they found Tarvin and half a dozen more of his henchmen already gathered. A council of war was held.

Bat Tarvin listened with frowning attentiveness to the accounts of how the whispering stranger had so effectively upset the careful plans for the slaying of Bob Frazier. Questioned by their chief, all the men who had seen and heard the mysterious man in black declared that they had not recognized him or even formed a suspicion as to his identity; the man who had slugged and robbed Pete might or might not have been the same whispering stranger.

"We'll find out who that guy is," snarled Tarvin, "and he'll be laying on a marble slab."

BEYOND saying that he was going to drag in a certain dame who had been pulling some monkey business, Tarvin told the gathered gangsters nothing about the woman who had called him on the telephone. Bat was considerably puzzled about that female. He outlined a plan for rounding her up and bringing her to his apartment for an interview.

The messenger-boy with whom Tarvin had made the appointment on the preceding night, arrived at the apartment just a few minutes before noon. He left almost at once in company with Banty Mellon. They went directly to the post office, where Banty Mellon mailed a bright green envelope addressed to Polly Valentine, general delivery. That envelope contained ten one-hundred-dollar bills.

Bat Tarvin meant to catch the mysterious woman who had volunteered the intriguing information on the preceding night. Having mailed the letter, Banty took a post where he could watch all patrons who called at the "V" window of the general-delivery section. His job was to trail the woman to whom the green envelope he had mailed was passed out. The messenger-boy, instructed by Banty, also took up a vigil. He paced a beat where he could look over all women approaching the general-delivery section. Upon recognizing the woman who had given him the message for Tarvin, the boy was to report at once to Banty. According to Tarvin's plan, things would begin to happen from that point.

At ten minutes past five, the telephone in Bat Tarvin's apartment rang. The gang chieftain and eight of his henchmen sat smoking and drinking in the big living-room. They were waiting for Banty Mellon to bring in the woman he had been set to trap. Tarvin answered the phone.

"A woman wants to talk to you," said the girl at the switchboard. "She says her name is Polly Valentine."

"All right," snapped Tarvin.

"Hello—Tarvin?" inquired a cool voice which the racketeer instantly recognized.

"Yes."

"Thanks for the grand," said the voice sweetly. "You can call off your men at the post office. Did you really think I was so dumb? I had left a forwarding address with the clerk at the 'V' window. I got your contribution an hour ago in Hammond."

"Slick dame, aint you?" growled Tarvin. "What's the news?"

"Listen, Big Shot," purred the voice. "I've got some more info' for you, but before I spill it you've got to promise to stop this business of trying to catch me. It's a waste of time and it annoys me. When the time is ripe—when you have put the skids under Greek Tommy—I'll look you up. I'm playing safe until I find out if you are big enough to put Tommy out of business and run this town by yourself. Will you lay off me until I'm ready to come and see you?"

"O. K., sister," agreed Tarvin. "You're on. What's the info'?"

"What do you want to know?"

"Where's that dick, Bob Frazier?"

"Greek Tommy has him hid out," was the prompt answer. "He's laying low in a room in one of Tommy's road-houses—either the Yellow Hen or the Silver Moon."

"How does Greek Tommy know so much about my private business?" was Tarvin's next answer.

"Some guy in your mob is snitching to Tommy," was the answer.

"Who?" demanded Tarvin sharply.

"I don't know," answered the woman, "but I'll find out. There may be more than one. I'll call you again the minute I can get a line on who is spilling."

"Do that," said the racketeer grimly.

"And here's something else," said the cool voice. "Tommy's men are going to hijack two truck-loads of your liquor tonight, two loads that are coming in from the north. That's all I could find out about it, but you probably know what to look out for. That's all I know this time. I'll be at the Silver Moon tonight until after eleven. I may call you up later, if I find out who is tipping Tommy off to your business."

"Just a minute," Tarvin snapped into the telephone. "Who is the whispering mug with the nitro that gummed up the works last night?"

"He's a New York rod," answered the voice. "He's a queer egg. Got some kind of a funny deal with Tommy. As near as I get it is that this whispering dude wants to make a big stake quick and blow the country. He works with the nitro because he says he never intends to go to the Big House again. He carries his pockets full of the stuff all the time. He either means to make his wad and go away—or take the guys that corner him to hell with him. Sounds kinda crazy, but that's the way he put it up to Tommy when they made their deal."

"Huh," grunted Bat. "Do you know his name?"

"No," answered the woman. "They call him the Whisper. Good-by. I may buzz you later. I notice the newspapers are calling him the Black Whisper."

THE receiver clicked. Frowning darkly, Tarvin set down the telephone and turned to face his henchmen. He glared at them in silence for a moment. The news that there was a traitor—possibly more than one—in his organization, disturbed the racketeer chief.

"Bones," he said finally, "you skip down to the post office and bring that damned fool Banty back here. Give the kid five bucks and send him back to his office."

Bones Lanphere finished a drink he was holding and set down the glass. He departed without a word.

"Now," snapped Tarvin when Bones had departed, "you guys listen. Greek Tommy aint satisfied with the break we've been giving him and his mob. He's got big ideas. Bob Frazier turned me down and then sold out to Tommy. It was Tommy that sent that whispering bird to gum up the works last night."

"One thing is sure," growled Buck Kistler, the gunman who had driven the first murder-party to suffer defeat at the hands of the Black Whisper. "If he dropped that

bottle of soup he was carryin', there would have been pieces of him and us and that bus and the dick scattered over a couple of counties."

"Just the same," snarled Tarvin, "we've got to get that bird and Bob Frazier and clean Greek Tommy and his mob out of this burg. We start the job tonight—just as soon as Bones and Banty get back."

"I got one thing to say," put in another of the men who had been a victim of the masked whisperer. "I aint takin' no shots at that whispering bozo unless I'm a long ways off, or know that he aint carryin' his pockets full of soup. He's too damned liable to turn into an explosion right under your nose."

"That's the way I feel," grunted Buck Kistler. "That bird is plenty careless with that bang juice, too!"

"We've got to get him," insisted Tarvin. "But the first job we've got to do tonight is to give a bellyful to some of Greek Tommy's rods who are planning to hijack the booze that Lee and Skid are bringing down from the farm. We gotta hustle on our way as soon as Bones and Banty are here, because the boys are due to leave the farm at nine o'clock. Here's what we'll do."

SWIFTLY Tarvin outlined a plan for springing a fatal surprise on the men who planned to hijack the Tarvin liquor. The men listened in grim-faced silence. When the gangster chief had finished, they all poured drinks. Bones Lanphere and Banty Mellon walked in while they were drinking. . . .

At nine-thirty that night a grim caravan formed in the barnyard of a farm some forty miles from Chicago. Five bullet-proof sedans were preparing to convoy two truckloads of moonshine whisky to the city. The farm was a blind for a giant still operated by hirelings of Bat Tarvin. Some thirty acres of timbered pasture hid the house and buildings from the highway.

The booze caravan formed with three of the bullet-proof sedans in the lead. Then came the two liquor-laden trucks. The other two sedans brought up the rear. The driver of each truck wore a bullet-proof vest and a helmet designed to protect the head from screaming lead. From loopholes in the sedans protruded the ugly muzzles of machine-guns. Bat Tarvin was himself riding in the rear car. He meant to teach Greek Tommy's hijackers a lesson.

The procession moved out of the farmyard and into a lane which led to the highway at a point about half a mile from the farmhouse. The killers who manned the machine-guns sat alert and ready. The drivers held to the wheels tightly, ready for any emergency.

The highway to which the lane led was a little-used graveled road which connected with the main concrete thoroughfare seven miles from the farmhouse distillery. The Tarvin forces more than half expected the hijacking attempt to be made somewhere along this seven-mile stretch. Even at that, the trouble faced them before they thought it possible.

As the leading car rounded a bend in the lane and approached the graveled highway, the light from its powerful lamps fell upon an obstruction in the road. A box had been set on each side of the narrow lane and a sixteen foot two-by-four timber laid from one box to the other. On the flat surface of the timber stood four pint flasks filled with a pale liquid. Against the obstruction sat a big cardboard and on its white face big black letters read:

NITRO
MORE IN DITCHES ON EACH SIDE
DON'T MOVE CARS
NOTE BELOW IS FOR TARVIN

On the ground at the foot of the sign lay a white envelope. Buck Kistler was at the wheel of the front sedan. He glanced at either side as he and the others in the leading car finished reading the message on the cardboard sign. The pasture was quite thickly timbered on either side of the lane and the darkness was dense among the trees. Buck opened the door and slid quickly from the car. He didn't want that bottled stuff to be agitated. Swiftly he ran back to the rear car and made a sign to Bat Tarvin who was seated beside the driver. Bat opened the door a little way and listened to the excited report of his henchman.

"Go bring me that note," ordered Tarvin hoarsely. His face had gone pale and he shot a worried glance into the darkness about him.

Buck was back in a hurry, and thrust the white envelope into his Chief's hand. Tarvin tore it open, snapped on the dome light in the car and read the typewritten message.

TARVIN:

Your cars and trucks are surrounded by enough nitro to blow you guys and your boilers into scrap-iron and mincemeat. From a safe place I can pull a string and start the fireworks. Get out of your bus and gather all your gang in the light of the front car's lamps.

Don't make a wrong move—or up you go. When you get your gang up in the light, have everybody strip naked and do it quick. I'm where I can watch. If you are not moving according to directions within five minutes after you read this, pop goes the weasel—and a lot of other things! Have your gang step away from the pile of clothes as soon as they are undressed.

THE WHISPER.

Unprintable words came from the white lips of the racketeer as he finished reading. For a moment he sat motionless. Then he slid from the car, growling an order for the other occupants to follow him.

"Tell all the guys in the other boilers to come up in front of the head car," Tarvin snarled at Buck Kistler.

A few minutes later twenty-two gangsters stood in the light of the leading car, in the center of the forty-foot stretch of lane between the car and the ominous barricade. Bat Tarvin told them in a hoarse voice of the orders contained in the whisperer's message. Buck Kistler was stripping off his garments before the racketeer chief had finished. The others followed his example. In a surprisingly short time the entire crew stood naked in the lane. The autumn chill was sharp in the air and they shivered as they moved away from the heap which contained their garments and weapons.

FROM the darkness stepped a slender figure in dark garments, wearing a black silk mask. Close behind this one followed a stocky man dressed in gray tweeds and also masked. The stocky one carried a large carton. The man in black carried a pint flask full of pale fluid.

The stocky figure set down the carton and took a sub-machine-gun from the front sedan of the caravan. He inspected this weapon and then calmly trained it on the huddle of naked gangsters. The slender chap stepped up to the shivering figure of Bat Tarvin.

"Well, Tarvin," came a sharp, clear whisper from behind the mask, "I hardly expected so many of you. But it's all the same. I'm going over and take my friend's place with the machine-gun. You rats can step over into the ditch there at the left of the lane. Then stand still or you'll all gain some weight that won't make you feel any healthier."

The whisperer moved back, dropped the bottle of nitro into a side pocket of his coat, and took the deadly gun from the hands of his companion. The other then picked up the carton and calmly gathered up more than a dozen

bottles of nitro from the barricade and the ditches on either side of the lane. He set the box down midway between the masked man in black and the group of naked hoodlums. Then he removed the barricade from the lane. While the whisperer stood covering the huddled gangsters, the stocky man gathered up the garments and weapons of the gangsters and piled them into the back of the first sedan. Then he ran the three leading sedans out into the graveled road where he left them parked—headed north.

When the sedans were out of the way, the stocky man picked up the carton of flasks and went to the rear of one of the two liquor trucks. Placing the carton on the seat cushions, he climbed up and settled himself at the wheel. He started the truck's powerful motor.

The slender man stepped forward, closer to Tarvin and the other hoodlums, where they could hear the sharp whisper in which he addressed them.

"I'm going to drive the front truck," declared the whisperer. "You birds are going to trot along in front of it. Get out in the middle of the road and stand there until I honk the horn. Then start ahead of me at a dog-trot. I'll have this hand-organ in my lap. Any of you try to duck out of the light of the lamps, and I'll play you a tune you won't like. At the second honk of my horn you can get off the road and let us past."

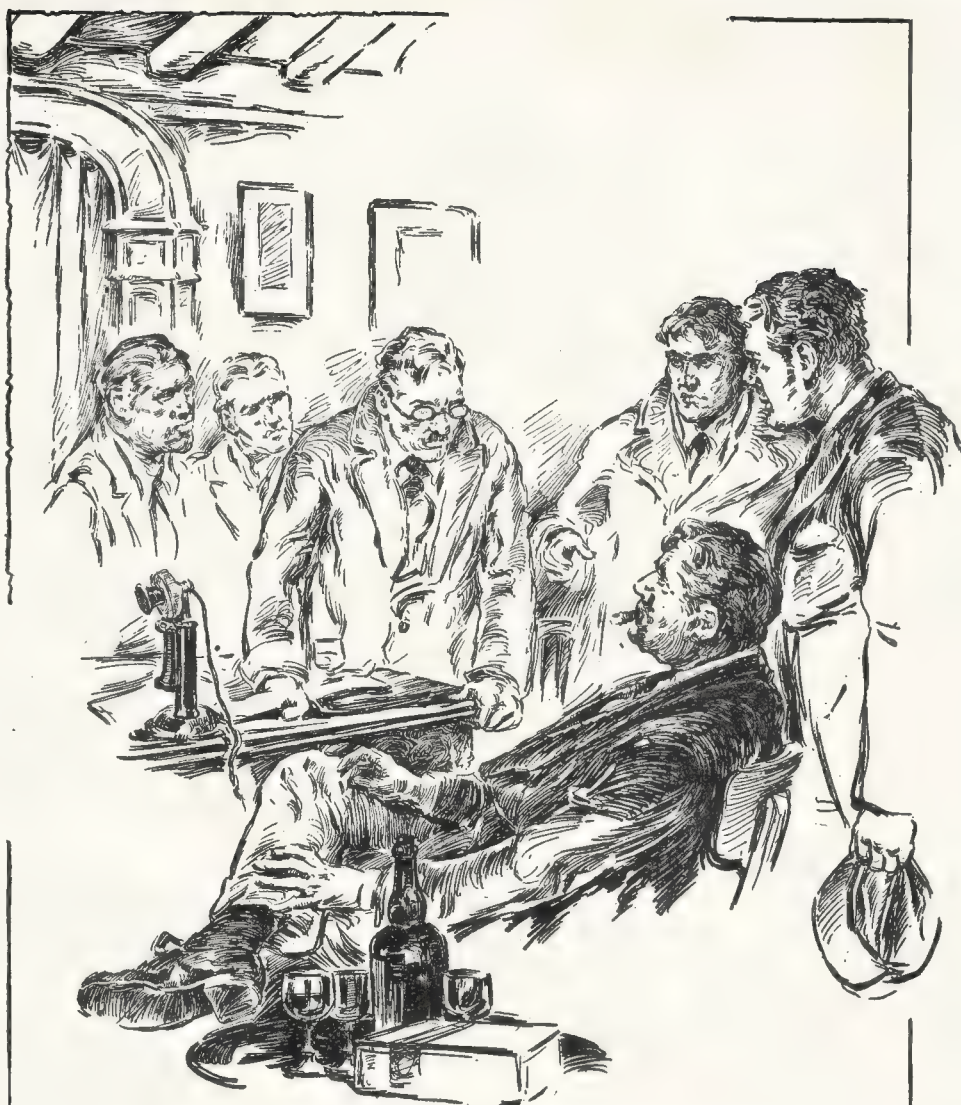
Two minutes later a weird procession was headed south down the graveled road. At the double quick, twenty-two naked gangsters hurried ahead of the two slowly rolling liquor trucks. At first the shivering men were glad of the chance to start their blood circulating, but a half-mile trot found them all blowing. The sharp gravel had cut their feet until blood marked many tracks.

Finally there came a honk from the horn of the leading truck. The grateful gangsters stumbled into the ditches on either side of the road and the two trucks picked up speed and roared past them to race away in the direction of the highway which led cityward.

As the trucks sped away into the darkness, the gangsters limped painfully into the middle of the road. With profane declarations concerning the dire vengeance soon to be meted out to one Greek Tommy, Bat Tarvin took charge.

"Back to the cars," snarled Tarvin. "We'll get our clothes and get the guns. Maybe we can catch those trucks before they get to town. If we don't, I know something that that Greek don't know that I know! Move—before we all freeze!"

Twenty minutes later the naked gangsters limped and hobbled up to where their abandoned cars stood. Not a single car had met or overtaken them on the road. The shivering men sorted out their clothing and donned it,



"My God, Tarvin!" gasped the lawyer. "Is there nothing you won't do?"

groaning and cursing as they thrust bruised and lacerated feet into their shoes.

The stolen trucks had a lead of nearly an hour when the five gangster cars roared along the road at last in pursuit. Tarvin's men had orders to open fire the moment the two trucks were sighted—the idea being to blow up the carton of nitro and trust the bullet-proof sedans to protect the avengers. But the trucks were not overtaken.

At the edge of the city's first large suburb, Tarvin halted his caravan. There was a brief powwow and the five sinister sedans swung northward. It was just a few minutes after eleven when they turned from the road and halted in the yard of a road-house above which an electric sign read *Silver Moon*. The five cars deployed and stopped in positions where the eighteen machine-guns covered all sides of the road-house. A moment later there was a short blast from the throats of the deadly weapons and the bullets thudded into the weatherboard sides of the place.

Panic ensued immediately within the road-house. Women screamed and men cursed. Lights went out and there were sounds of struggle. Then a sort of quiet came.

"Turn on the lights," barked Bat Tarvin through the darkness. "We'll wait ten minutes for everybody to get out of this dump and beat it. But turn on the lights and everybody leave by the front door. We're looking for,

just one guy. Nobody else will get hurt, if they beat it quick."

After a moment the lights in the building went on. More than a hundred men and women poured out of the front door and hurried away, only a few stopping for their parked cars. The others fled on foot from the scene. Sharp, cold eyes scanned the fleeing stream of humanity, but Bob Frazier did not emerge with the others.

When it was apparent that the place was empty of all who meant to come out, two figures leaped from the cars and ran into the building. They emerged again in a couple of minutes, but leaping flames within the wooden structure were already painting the many windows with a bloody flicker. The two firebugs returned to the gangster cars. Then the night was shattered with the snarling sputter of eighteen machine-guns, and the hissing streams of lead raked the building from all angles. The bombardment lasted for about a minute. Then silence fell and the gangsters sat watching. In three minutes more the big building was a roaring furnace from which no man could escape with his life. The motors of the gangster cars roared and the five sedans sped away into the night.

Ten minutes later, and seven miles away, the same sort of scene was enacted at a similar road-house known as the Yellow Hen. Again the Tarvin killers failed to see their quarry in the fleeing crowd. Their cars roared away from the scene, leaving the second of Greek Tommy's road-houses a seething mass of flames. If Frazier had been in either dive, he was now a cinder. The vandal cars separated and sped toward the city by different routes.

MIDNIGHT was not half an hour gone when Bat Tarvin and the three men who had shared the sedan in which he rode, entered the downtown headquarters of the racketeer chief. The rest of the crew would be arriving shortly. The gangsters fell into chairs to take the weight off tortured feet.

"Greek Tommy," snarled Tarvin, as he poured a drink, "will soon know that monkeying with my stuff is bad business. If he had that dick hid in either one of those road-houses, we won't have to worry about Frazier any more."

"I wonder," said another gangster, "if that was sure enough nitro in them bottles."

"If you'd seen what happened the other night when that whispering yegg tossed one of them bottles into a vacant lot behind a billboard," spoke up Buck Kistler, "you'd quit wonderin'."

"Well—"

The telephone cut off what Tarvin had started to say. The gang chief answered the call.

"Polly Valentine calling," said the switchboard operator.

"All right," snapped the racketeer.

"Hello—Tarvin?" came the now familiar voice a moment later.

"Yes."

"You sure handed Greek Tommy one tonight," said the voice. "But you didn't get Frazier. Tommy is throwing a birthday party for another—for a dame over at his dump on Roosevelt Road. Frazier is there. So are the two trucks of liquor that Tommy's men took away from you. Tommy just got word of what you did to the road-houses. Some of his rods recognized your cars and some of your mob."

"Tommy is calling in all his rods and muscle-men to the dump. They're going to do something, but I didn't get what they planned. I ducked out to call you. By the way, I found out that Frazier is the baby who planted the stool pigeons in your mob, but I didn't find out who

they are. If you'd hurry, you could get to Tommy's dump before he does any more than get his gang together."

"Good," grunted Tarvin.

"Then," inquired the voice, "I'd better stay out of the dump?"

"You had," snapped the racketeer.

"I'll call you up tomorrow," said the voice coolly. "I'll be needing some more sugar. Good-by!"

While Tarvin was at the telephone, three more gangsters had arrived. Bat turned and began to snap orders at the gathered men. There was a nasty look on the gang chief's face and a cold glint in his eyes.

THAT night occurred a gang battle that is still discussed with awe in underworld circles from New York to Frisco and from Portland to Buenos Aires. At half-past one o'clock a score of cars bore down on the Roosevelt Road dive run by Greek Tommy. The place was a two-story brick building which stood on a corner. The arrival of the gangster-loaded cars was timed perfectly. As they halted, each car ejected a well-aimed bomb. The brick structure shuddered as the shattering explosions rent the cold night. Then a bedlam of machine-gun fire broke from the Tarvin cars. The spraying lead concentrated on the windows and doors of the place. Greek Tommy's gangsters, gathered within for a conference, were caught like rats in a trap. They flung themselves prone on the floor—those who did not drop with lead in their vitals—and lay wondering when the building would collapse about their ears.

Then Greek Tommy's voice was heard and gangsters who were still able to move began to worm across the floor toward a secret exit which led through the wall to the next building. From the cellar of that next building a tunnel led to the basement of a garage across the alley.

While Tarvin's choppers continued to pour their lead through windows and doors of the dive on the corner, Greek Tommy led more than thirty men by the secret passages to the garage. Then ten cars came roaring out of the garage and around the corner. Into the midst of Tarvin's host charged the autos of Greek Tommy. More than a score of machine-guns added their voices to the chorus of death. Flying slugs of lead crossed paths on their sinister missions. The pavement was spotted with blood.

The spiteful crack of automatic pistols mingled with the sputtering hymn of hate that came from the red throats of the machine-guns. Under the continued pounding of leaden slugs, bullet-proof glass finally shattered and fell from its frame. Through the opening thus made, hissing lead sped to bury itself in flesh and bone. For nearly fifteen minutes the battle raged before police cars and fire apparatus, converging on the scene, gained the upper hand. Forty-six gangsters and eleven innocent citizens were dead as a result of the battle. Some two score of injured were gathered up and rushed to the nearest hospitals. Among the latter was Greek Tommy. He died while surgeons worked over him on the operating-table.

From a safe distance, Bat Tarvin, Bones Lanphere, Buck Kistler and Banty Mellon had listened to the battle. As the sounds of conflict died away Tarvin growled an order to Kistler, at the wheel. The big car turned and sped away from the neighborhood.

"Drive past Chief Bohling's house," ordered Tarvin when the big car was safely away from the scene of battle. "There'll be hell to pay tomorrow and we'll be better off with Bohling out of the way."

The car sped on for several blocks while the gangsters remained silent. Then Tarvin spoke again.

"Listen, Bones," he said. "Bohling's garage is built

right onto the house. His chauffeur sleeps upstairs over the garage. There is a window in the back of the garage. Here is the idea."

Tarvin talked earnestly for five minutes while Bones Lanphere listened intently. When Bat finished Bones fished an automatic, with a silencer attached, from a pocket of one of the car doors. He thrust the unwieldy weapon into his pocket.

Five minutes later the car halted for a moment near the residence of Chief of Detectives Bohling. Bones stepped from the auto and slipped off through the shadows. The big car rolled away down the street. Another twenty-minute drive brought the car to the palatial residence of Tarvin in an exclusive residential district. Tarvin and his two henchmen left the car parked under the portico and went into the mansion. After the trio had helped themselves to liquor from a sideboard, Tarvin instructed Banty Mellon to order all the servants to get up and get out of the house at once. They were not to come back until noon of the following day.

When Banty had departed on his errand, Tarvin took a note-book from his pocket, consulted it and went to the telephone.

A few minutes later he was in conversation with Arnold Greenspun, the lawyer. After several minutes of talk with Greenspun, the gang chieftain hung up the receiver and turned to where Buck Kistler sat sipping at a glass of liquor.

"Greenspun will get a line on things and be right out," said Tarvin.

"There'll be a lot of hell to pay about this," growled Kistler.

"This had to come," snarled Tarvin. "Thesquawk will blow over. If Frazier is gone, we aint got nobody that amounts to anything against us on the force. When Bohling is out of the way, we'll be setting on the world. Greek Tommy and his gang gone—no opposition—and the fear of God put in the hearts of all the suckers in this burg! We won't even have to bring in any more rods to take the place of the boys that got rubbed out tonight."

"Yeah," grunted Buck Kistler, gulping down his drink. There was the sound of an opening door and Bones Lanphere walked into the room. The gaunt gangster answered his Chief's questioning look with a grim nod.

"O. K.," grunted Tarvin. "I'm getting rid of the help. Have a drink."

Bones accepted the invitation. Just as the unquestioning servants were leaving the house, Arnold Greenspun entered the living-room of Tarvin's palatial residence. The famous shyster was plainly in an unpleasant humor.

"You certainly raised hell tonight, Bat!" snapped the

lawyer. "You'll have the whole town yelling for your blood before noon tomorrow. Chief Bohling will jump onto the department with both feet and he'll have public opinion behind him. It—"

"Just a minute," interrupted Tarvin. "With Bohling and Bob Frazier out of the way, we can handle the dicks and the cops, can't we?"

"Yes, but—"

"Bohling and his chauffeur are out in the garage now," said Tarvin. "Bones hid in Bohling's garage and got them both with a silencer. You know Bohling's garage is built

onto his house. Well, then Bones dumped them both in the back of the car and drove here with it. Lee and Skid are coming to take the car up to the farm and it will be took to pieces

and buried before tomorrow night. As soon as the oven gets hot—in about three hours—we'll make

ashes out of Bohling and his chauffeur like we did out of old Tom Gardner and his cub. There won't be any *corpus delicti*."

"My God, Tarvin!" gasped the lawyer. "Is there nothing you won't do?"

"Was Bob Frazier among the dead ones?" asked the racketeer, ignoring the question.

"His body hasn't been found yet," answered Greenspun shakily.

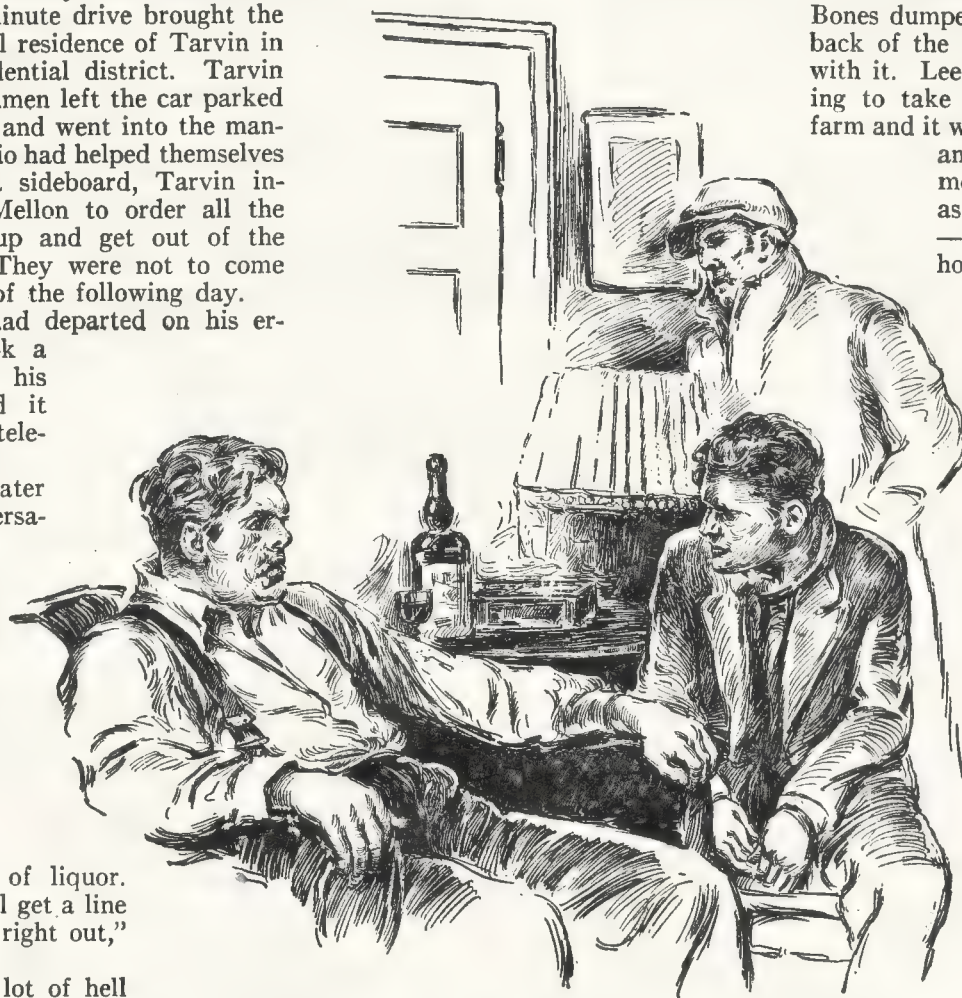
"I think it will be," said Tarvin.

"Another thing," said Greenspun in a husky voice; "Arthur Clack will probably quit playing the game with you after this business. You know he's against the massacre stuff—and you need him to handle a lot of the big money deals. He—"

"Clack will do what I tell him to," snarled Tarvin; "don't you worry about that. He may be a slick banker, but he's a yellow crook. I've got proof hid away that he framed the Gardner cub and forced the old man to the wall. Old Tom Gardner had the evidence in his pockets to put Clack in stir when the boys bumped him off. I aint afraid of Clack crawfishing."

Then he leered at Greenspun through red-rimmed eyes.

"No," muttered the racketeer. "I aint afraid of Clack quitting on me, any more than I am of *you* laying down! I got plenty on you both. You get on back and stick around your office, in case I need you. If any of the boys get dragged in by the dicks, I want them sprung quick."



"We'll all hit the hay as soon as the oven gets hot and we make ashes of them two stiff."

"All right," croaked Greenspun, rising. "But for God's sake get the—the bodies of Bohling and his chauffeur disposed of! There—"

"Trot along," snapped Tarvin, "and don't worry. The oven will be hot in a few hours."

Fairly ill with fright and worry, the shyster departed.

"I'd give a lot to know if we got that whispering soup-carrier last night," growled Bat Tarvin.

"If we didn't," observed Banty Mellon, "he aint got anybody left to work for. Gawd, I'm sleepy!"

"We'll all hit the hay as soon as the oven gets hot and we make ashes of them two stiffs," answered Tarvin.

THE telephone in Bob Frazier's room at the Pfister Hotel in Milwaukee set up a clamor just a few minutes after three A.M. The veteran detective answered.

"Hello—Frazier?" came a clear voice over the wire.

"Yes."

"Get a plane and get back to Chicago as soon as you can," directed the voice brusquely. "This is the fellow who sent you away—the Black Whisper, as the newspapers have called me. Have your pilot land at the municipal airport. Ask at the field office for a message. There will be a Western Union messenger waiting with it."

"What's up?" demanded Frazier.

"The message will tell you," answered the voice. "Get started. Every moment counts. If you move fast, today will see the end of gang rule in this city."

The connection was abruptly severed. A moment later Frazier was instructing the desk to order a plane to take him to Chicago at once. He promised to be at the airport in twenty minutes. . . .

Bob Frazier landed at the Chicago municipal airport at four-fifteen. He leaped from the plane that had brought him and dashed across the tarmac to the field office. There he snatched a message from the hand of a waiting boy. Tearing the envelope open, he extracted a typewritten page and read:

DEAR FRAZIER:

Chief Bohling and his chauffeur have been murdered. If you raid Tarvin's home at once, you will be in time to prevent the cremation of their bodies in an incinerator in Tarvin's basement.

Take plenty of help; also take a raiding-party to a place known as the Galt farm, seven miles northwest of Lombard. There you will find Bohling's auto being dismantled with the intention of burying the parts. There will be a package delivered at your office in the morning. The package will contain evidence which will enable you to end permanently the gang outrages in Chicago.

Sincerely,
THE WHISPER.

In a commandeered roadster, Lieutenant Bob Frazier sped from the airport to detective headquarters. There he dashed into his private office and began barking orders over the telephone.

In less time than it takes to tell it, a raiding-party of twenty cars, loaded with men bearing riot-guns and tear-bombs, was gathered and went speeding northward in the wake of the car which bore Bob Frazier and his driver. Presently the raiding cars turned into the drive which led to the mansion occupied by Bat Tarvin.

The men had their instructions. They wasted no time. While half of them circled the house and covered all sides with the riot-guns, the rest, grotesque in gas-masks and carrying sacks of tear-bombs, crashed into the house by doors and windows. There was the sound of several shots from the inside of the house. Then the firing ceased. Ten minutes passed and then the raiding-party poured from the gas-filled mansion. They carried with them the bodies of Chief of Detectives Bohling and his chauffeur.

Handcuffed and herded by a dozen masked officers, came Bat Tarvin, Bones Lanphere, Banty Mellon and Buck Kistler. No servants or other gangsters had been found.

The victims had been surprised in the basement where they were preparing to reduce the bodies of Chief Bohling and his chauffeur to ashes. They were gasping and sobbing for breath, having been overcome by the tear gas almost before they realized that doom had overtaken them.

After locking up Tarvin and his henchmen, Bob Frazier did not go home. He napped in his swivel chair in his office, waiting for the package which the mysterious Black Whisper had promised would arrive in the morning. It was delivered shortly after eight o'clock. Frazier abandoned the breakfast which he had ordered sent in from a near-by café. He first opened a letter which accompanied the bulky package. The letter read:

DEAR FRAZIER:

In this package you will find several dozen dictaphone records. If you will run them off I think you will feel free to make a number of arrests. The records will reproduce for you every word that has been said for the past two weeks in the downtown apartment and the North Avenue home of Bat Tarvin.

From these records you will learn, among other things, that Thomas Gardner and his son Elmer, who have been missing for several weeks, were murdered by Bat Tarvin and their bodies burned.

You will also learn that Arthur Clack, president of the Merchants Trust Company, and Arnold Greenspun were accomplices in the Gardner murders. That will merely be a starter. You should be able to imprison, convict and send to death every one of the "men higher up" in the underworld of the city.

Sincerely,
THE BLACK WHISPER.

Hours later, Bob Frazier sat back in his chair in thoughtful silence. What he had heard in listening to the records, had more than borne out the promise of the message from the Black Whisper. Suddenly Frazier sat up and pressed a button on the corner of his desk.

"I'm just a dumb dick," he muttered to himself, "but I could be dumber. There's a chance."

The door opened and a subordinate appeared.

"Send Carlton, Wittmack, Brandes and Morton in here," ordered Frazier.

FIVE minutes later the four detectives for whom he had sent stood before him. Frazier rose.

"Two of you," he ordered, "will go to Bat Tarvin's house on North Avenue. The other two will go to his apartment. Tear up the places until you find some hidden dictaphones or microphones. Then trace the wires and arrest and bring in anybody you find at the receiving end of them."

Nearly three hours later Lieutenant Bob Frazier sat facing two men who had been brought into his office by the detectives he had sent on the wire-tracing mission. One of the men was a slender, dark-eyed chap of twenty-five or twenty-six. The other was a stocky, red-headed youth.

"So, Leonard," Frazier grinned, gazing at the slender prisoner, "you are the Black Whisper!"

"I did not pick out the name," answered the slender one. "What are you going to do with us?"

"Tell me the story," countered Frazier. "Then I'll answer your question."

"Well," began the slender youth, "in the first place, I see that you know me."

"There are not many people in the city who do not know Leonard Gardner, Chicago's favorite radio announcer—at least by sight," answered Frazier. "I believe you are the son and brother of the two Gardners whom you mentioned in the message you sent with the dictaphone records. Yes?"

"I am." The youth nodded. "As you may know, I was a radio mechanic for years before it was discovered, by a fluke, that I had a voice that carried exceptionally well over the radio."

"I remember reading about that," agreed Frazier.

"Well," went on young Gardner, "I gained a little popularity as an announcer."

"You put it modestly." The detective grinned.

AT any rate my voice has become so well known that I had to disguise it when I went about my task of cleaning the gangsters out of this city," continued the youth. "So I whispered. My whisper carries very well."

"I noticed that," observed Frazier. "In forty-eight hours after you made your debut and announced your intention of cleaning up on the racketeers, you finished the job. What I want to know is how you did it."

"I'll enlighten you," replied young Gardner. "But please let me tell the yarn in my own way. Then ask me questions if you wish when I have finished the story."

"Shoot!" ordered Frazier, leaning back in his chair.

"In the first place," explained Gardner, "while the actual execution of the plan occupied but two days, weeks were spent in its preparation. My elder brother, Elmer, disappeared just a little more than six weeks ago. He was employed in the Merchants Trust Company, Arthur Clack's bank. The day following Elmer's disappearance, Clack came to my father and said that Elmer's accounts had been found short more than two hundred thousand dollars. Clack said that he had come to Father before making the news public, thinking that Father would like to make up the shortage and save the family unpleasant publicity. Father told Clack that he had no ready funds. Clack then suggested that Father turn over to him the nearly finished home on North Avenue—which Dad had been intending to give Elmer as a wedding present. You know that Elmer was engaged to Alicia Morris?"

"Yes," Frazier nodded.

"Well," continued Leonard Gardner, "my father turned the North Avenue place over to Clack, who said he believed he could find a quick sale for it. Two days later the place was deeded to Bat Tarvin. That still further roused my father's suspicion that something was wrong. He had never for a moment believed that Elmer was guilty of the theft. He started further investigations than the search for Elmer, which was already under way. I do not know just what Father learned, but it cost him his life. He disappeared about three weeks ago. He'd told me enough so I was satisfied Bat Tarvin was behind the devilment."

"I quit my job and got busy. The North Avenue house was just finished. Tarvin had not yet moved in. I broke into it one night and installed a set of small but extremely sensitive microphones. You may know that I hold patents on a number of improvements in such instruments. I placed my instruments in such places that there was little danger of immediate discovery. Then I ran my wires to the apartment where your men found me tonight. I next watched my chance and went into Tarvin's downtown apartment house as an inspector of wiring from the fire department. (I am a godchild of the fire commissioner.) I installed another instrument in the apartment, above the wallpaper of the ceiling in the living-room. I cut through from the attic. Tarvin's apartment is on the top floor. Then I ran the wires from there to my rented apartment."

"The result is that I have been able to hear and keep a record of everything that was said in Tarvin's apartment or the North Avenue place for the last two weeks. You have heard those records."

"Yes," agreed Frazier. "You need not explain that angle

further. But what was the idea of the Black Whisper rôle?"

"There was a double idea," answered young Gardner. "I wanted to set Tarvin and Greek Tommy at each other's throats. I did that by having Tarvin tipped off that I was a New York rod, imported by Greek Tommy to help him get rid of Tarvin's gang and gain control of the city. Alicia Morris, Elmer's fiancée, did that. I coached her and she pretended to be a girl who had turned against Greek Tommy for some fancied wrong. Tarvin fell for it. The result was his raid on Tommy's birthday party."

"The second idea behind the Black Whisper rôle was to collect from Tarvin the amount of which he had robbed Father through his trickery. I had only collected fourteen thousand dollars when the events of last night brought things to a head. I was unable to prevent the murder of Chief Bohling and his chauffeur, because that crime was evidently planned away from the microphones. You listened to the records and therefore know how I learned that my brother and father had been murdered and their bodies cremated in another private incinerator out at the booze farm. By the way, did your men find Chief Bohling's car out there?"

"Yes," answered Frazier. "And they pinched that gang and are on the way in with them now. I'll tell you something else. You will undoubtedly get the North Avenue house back. It will be restored to your father's estate by due process of law. Answer me one more question: What was the idea in taking such long risks with that nitro you carried around?"

"That nitro was just water, properly colored." And Leonard Gardner grinned.

"What about the bottle you tossed over the billboard?"

"Just a gesture," smiled Gardner, "calculated to help other things convince Tarvin's rats that I was a crazy guy who would just as soon be blown to smithereens as not. It made them docile when I came near them. My friend Spud here was hidden in a sheltered place at the rear of that lot. When the bottle came over the billboard, Spud, with a detonator, set off a stick of dynamite which was buried in loose earth in the middle of the lot. I should have staged the demonstration anyhow. It was just good luck for me that you happened to question the nature of the contents of the flasks."

"Well," snorted Frazier, "I *will* be damned!"

I HOPE not," said the erstwhile Black Whisper. "But tell me another thing. If I am to get the North Avenue place back, what shall I do with the fourteen thousand dollars I took away from Tarvin?"

"Ever hear of a guy named Swanson who runs a place over in Floptown known as the 'Refuge'?" asked Frazier after a few moments of thoughtful silence. "He keeps a free lodging-house for as many down-and-outers as he can accommodate. Also puts out free bread and soup twice a day to the bums."

"I get you," Young Gardner nodded. "May Spud and I go now?"

"Yes," answered Frazier, "if you will promise to stay in town where I can find you when you are needed to testify."

"Thanks," said Gardner. "We'll be on hand. It will be a pleasure."

Alec Swanson, eccentric Samaritan of Floptown, is still wondering as to the source of fourteen thousand dollars which was delivered to him in a package by a messenger-boy. The only message with the money was seven typewritten words:

"From a friend. Keep up the good work."

Devil's Salvage

*A girl in the power of a counterfeiter gang on a lonely Caribbean island—with a convict escaped from Devil's Island for a protector. . . .
A famous writer at his best.*

By HENRY C. ROWLAND

Illustrated by Frank Hoban

The Story So Far:

GUN-RUNNING is a dangerous business. Yet it all started naturally enough: Clare Costello and her brother Jim had by the death of their father been left nearly penniless, save for a small seagoing motor-yacht. So they had gone into business with their yacht, the *Jacana*—chartering to scientific and exploring expeditions, carrying small express cargoes and the like.

On this trip, however, there were some heavy boxes aboard which Jim was reticent about. And he had left Clare in charge of the boat near the mouth of a Central American river, while he went upstream on business. Two days later, shortly before dawn a native runner brought Clare the startling message:

"If this boy reaches you in time, slip downriver and out to sea and make for Trinidad. Lopez and I were nabbed, are now in calaboose. Patrol-boat apt to start down at daylight. If they grab the schooner, good night! Do what you can from Trinidad to get me clear."

Even as Clare read the note, she saw the patrol-boat's searchlight seeking the *Jacana*. And her negro crew were ashore A.W.O.L. . . . Well, she could run that boat by herself: she put to sea just in time to escape the patrol-boat, and laid a course for Trinidad.

Soon after sunup, however, she all but ran down a dugout manned by seven wretched convicts escaped from Devil's Island. The dugout was swamped, and in spite of the danger, Clare took the men aboard the *Jacana*. The convict leader was the blond Russian giant called Ivan. Second in command was the Englishman Frank. The rest were simply—*les misérables*; yet they showed every respect to the lone girl Clare who had saved them.

Clare told her story to Ivan; he explained that the convicts could not risk Trinidad, but offered to provide money to effect Jim's release. This money was to come from a treasure of pearls buried on a small uninhabited island by a fellow-convict who had died, but had, in gratitude for a great favor, bequeathed his secret to Ivan.

The *Jacana* made the journey to that island without difficulty—but they found it inhabited by a gang of counterfeiters who at once opened fire upon them from their own larger motor cruiser. The *Jacana* rounded a promontory to temporary safety. And Ivan—certain that the more powerful vessel which had attacked and pursued them so ruthlessly would soon overtake and sink them—put Clare under Frank's escort ashore in a small boat.

The *Jacana* and her convict crew under Ivan escaped. But Clare and Frank were made prisoners by the brutal counterfeit chief Considine. Under a pretense of hospitality the man Considine, who was a drug-addict, tried to force his attentions upon Clare, and she with difficulty fought him off. Frank was treated with the utmost brutality; and on one occasion Considine's lieutenant Mallock tortured him by burning his forehead with a lighted cigar. Yet Frank arrived at Clare's cabin in time when Mallock,

in Considine's absence, tried to force his way in. In the fight that followed, Mallock and one of his men were killed with his own revolver. And Considine's other helpers, who were friendly to Frank, mistook the powder-burn on his forehead for a bullet-wound and regarded him with superstitious awe. . . .

Considine had left on a journey to dispose of some counterfeit money, and had agreed to do what he could toward securing Jim's release. Clare and Frank decided to attempt to escape aboard a scow used as a lighter; but first they slipped away and explored the island for the treasure buried by Ivan's friend. They found the spot; digging frantically, they finally brought up the treasure-chest; then as Clare snatched up a sack which presumably contained the pearls, Frank fainted from overexertion. (*The story continues in detail:*)

FRANK did not answer. Clare was horrified to see that he was scarcely conscious. But he managed to say faintly: "I'll be all right in a minute."

She sprang up and hurried over to her point of observation. What she saw then appalled her. One of the three men who had been helping with the lighter had left the group and was hurrying along the beach in her direction. The others were not in sight. It occurred to her that she and Frank might have been seen as they passed along the rise. Clare ran back to the cache, seized the sack of pearls and dropped them into the bosom of her dress, then closed the chest, piled the loose stones back on top of it and scattered some of the dried mossy turf over them.

She looked up, to find Frank watching dazedly. Clare sprang to her feet, reached down and seized his wrists.

"Come on," she cried. "Hurry! One of the men is coming. He mustn't see us here."

Frank mumbled something that she did not catch. He seemed only semiconscious. She got her arm under his and half-dragged, half-supported him away from the place toward the bit of higher ground from which the west extremity of the island and the sea beyond were visible.

They had scarcely reached this point when looking over her shoulder she saw the man who had come to look for them appear over the rise. On catching sight of them standing there, he stopped, stared for a moment, then came slowly toward them. It was another of the party who had been with Considine the day before.

The fellow seemed uncertain of the way in which he might be received. Perhaps Pierre had infused him with some superstitious fear of a man who could be shot through the head and yet carry on. He paused and called in a doubtful tone: "Pierre sent me to get you, miss."

"All right," Clare answered. "Come here."

The man obeyed. Clare was relieved to discover that he was very young, scarcely more than a boy, and that he had a doubtful worried look on his face. She thought he

might have been a sailor. He was thickly made and his muscular arms hung slightly flexed at the elbows. His hands were big, powerful and his fingers curved in a tonic grasp as if accustomed to pulling and hauling. His complexion was swarthy and Clare thought that he might have a slight strain of negro blood.

"What does Pierre want?" she asked.

"I don't know, ma'am. Only for me to get you. Likely he wants your advice about the boat."

"You seem willing to help."

"Us three want to go along, miss. There's like to be trouble about all this."

"All right. Lend a hand here. We came to see if there was any sail in sight to the westward." She glanced at Frank. "He's had a fever and now I think he's got a touch of sun."

Supporting Frank on either side, they managed to get him the short distance down to the beach and to a strip of shade under one of the cabins. As they reached this shelter from the intensity of the sun, Pierre and the two other men came from the factory carrying some planks, a coil of rope and a long heavy pole that was to serve as mast. Pierre laid down his saw and hammer and came over to where Clare was propping Frank against the side of the cabin.

"These men want to go with us, mam'selle," he said.

"They are afraid that you will send a Government boat here."

There was no reason that Clare could see for refusing. On the contrary, it was apt to make a more plausible story for these men to appear as the crew of the wrecked schooner. Their interest would lie in corroborating her report of their position.

Pierre said: "If for some reason the Captain should miss his rendezvous, he might start back. In that case we've no time to lose."

"Then he had a rendezvous?"

Pierre looked surprised. "But for what else should he leave? It was time for him to get rid of some more of my beautiful money."

"Where?"

"A boat meets him off Trinidad."

Clare nodded. "How soon can you get ready to shove off?"

"In about an hour, mam'selle. All we need to do now is to nail across a thwart to hold the mast. Then we can quickly rig the sail on a yard and put to sea. By sunset we could be far from the island, running off before the breeze."

"Yes, and when the wind drops we can get to work and make things more shipshape."

She went down to superintend the rigging of the lighter, although this was scarcely necessary—for the young man who had come after her proved to be an experienced sailor, quite as she had thought.

During the course of the work, he told her his father had been a master stevedore at Barbados and his mother part native. There seemed nothing to fear from the other two. All three of them had a wholesome respect for British West Indies law. Also they did not care to be on the island when Considine returned.

The double-ended scow had thole-pins for oars and could be steered with one of the big sweeps in a stern chock. It was quickly made ready for sea and provisioned with ample food and water, these stores of the sort that such a schooner as the *Jacana* would be apt to carry. Clare reflected that if there was any question about the instruments with which a crew of castaways would be certain to provide themselves on abandoning ship she would say merely that the schooner had struck hard and filled so quickly that there had been no more than time to haul the lighter alongside and scramble into her, throwing in some food and water and the awnings to serve as sails.

The dread of Considine's return kept them from delaying any longer than was absolutely necessary. Thinking the situation over, Clare no longer believed what Considine had told her about his intention to secure Jim's freedom. His present errand was probably to keep a rendezvous, as Pierre had said. The chances were that at fixed periods his agents bought his product outright for perhaps one half of its face value and then got rid of it as best they might. Considine was not the sort to trust in the good faith of anybody.

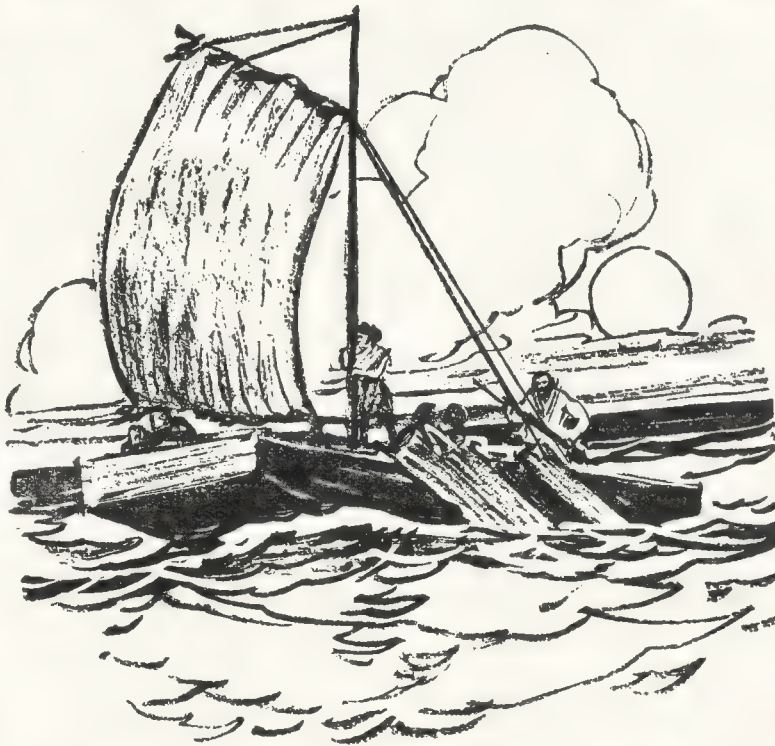
When folk are working against time in the face of threatened danger, its arrival appears to become more and more imminent as the minutes pass. Even Pierre was beginning to grumble and to curse softly in a mixture of good English and convict French. Clare thought they had better shove off. The wind would be dropping soon, so that every hour of delay meant an hour lost in their distance from the island.

They got aboard the clumsy lighter and pulled out with the long heavy oars to get clear of the lee of the land. Shrouds and back-stays had been rigged to reinforce the slender spars,

and presently the wind filled the sails improvised from awnings and directly before it the flat-bottomed scow began to scale ahead. Her sail power consisted of two of the scaffold poles as masts with lighter spars, to which were bent the awning sails.

It was sheer rapture for Clare to get clear of that dreadful island. She could only guess at the precise position of Granada but calculated that it must be dead to leeward and that they could scarcely help but sight it in running due west. This bearing was made close enough by the sun and the direction of the wind.

The afternoon wore on. Clare observed to her relief that Frank was resting comfortably. She kept the bandage



It was sheer rapture for Clare to get clear of that dreadful island. . . .
They sighted the superstructure of a steamer.

over his forehead moistened with brine; she did not miss the looks of awe directed at him as the round reddened hole between his eyes made itself apparent through the wet bandage.

She reflected that Considine's course back to the island would be very closely the reverse of their own, but there seemed to be no help for that. Pierre had thrown a number of planks into the lighter, and Clare thought that as soon as the wind dropped they might be able to rig lee-boards of a sort by nailing some of them down at angles to the straight sides of the scow. This would be necessary should they be compelled to haul on the wind; otherwise the big flat-bottomed craft would merely scale off broad-side on.

The sun sank lower, and the breeze lightened. They had sighted during the course of the afternoon a number of distant smokes and once the spars and stack and superstructure of a steamer appeared just over the horizon. Also there had been some distant sails, small cargo boats, and fishermen. It had not taken long to drop Considine's island out of sight astern.

And then just as the sun sank into a long nimbus cloud Clare caught a rosy flash on the horizon and her sea-going experience told her instantly that it was not caused by the horizontal rays striking against a sail. It was such a gleam as could only come from the painted side of a small vessel.

The young sailor had noticed her fixed gaze. He sprang up on the gunwale, supporting himself with one hand gripping a shroud.

"It's all up," he said gloomily. "We're done in, we are! Here comes Captain Considine."

Clare ordered the sails dropped and even the spars unshipped and lowered. She remembered the bearings of local points well enough to know that Considine's course back to the island must be a little north of east, while her own had been if anything north of west. She now argued that her scow ought by rights to be at their distance from the island well over the horizon and out of sight of Considine's return course.

But the others insisted that it was the *Caiman*, as Considine had named his yacht. They were less sure about it a few moments later, because it did not come up as quickly as one might expect.

The tension became extreme. Presently the yacht was identified beyond all doubt, and at the same time discovered to be on a course that should clear them by at least a couple of miles. It now became a race between the *Caiman* and the lowering visibility. Considine would be certain to investigate such a craft adrift, if only for its salvage.

Frank, who had revived as the heat abated, said to Clare: "All else aside, it would be too rotten a deal for us to get collared now."

"That's just the trouble, Frank. We've been all wrong from the start."

"There was nothing wrong about you, Clare, and you're the one whom it's hit hardest. That's what's all wrong about it."

"Jim and I were wrong too, wrong in being in a bad game. Now we're getting paid for it."

"It's not your fault," Frank said, "and perhaps you may not get paid for it."

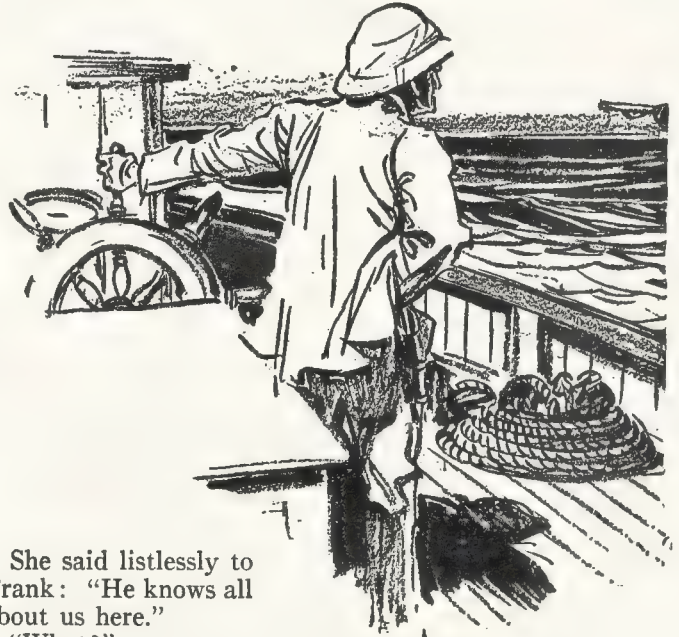
The yacht drew nearly abeam, about three miles away. If there had been the least commotion in the water, the lighter could scarcely have been seen in the lowered light. But the sea's surface was like a well-kept golf-course, or prairie of alfalfa freshly mowed. It did not look to be a fluid medium, but rather as if one could get overside and walk across it. Any object, even a crate adrift, must have

been conspicuous at a long distance, and Clare was astonished at their not having been sighted sooner.

She said to Frank in a breathless voice: "They must all be asleep. We can see even her skylights."

"Another couple of cable-lengths and we'll be fairly safe," he said.

As he spoke, there came to Clare one of her poignant intuitions. She knew at that moment as positively as if a gun had been fired at them that Considine was perfectly aware of the lighter's presence so close aboard. Hope faded from her.



She said listlessly to Frank: "He knows all about us here."

"What?"

"You'll see. That's the sort he is. Cruel and mean and small-spirited enough to play the cat-and-mouse act. He's going to run on past. Then when we think we're safe, he'll take a sheer and turn and come back for us."

There was conviction in her voice. Frank stared at her; his face lost its buoyant look. "I believe you're right."

"Of course I am. I get these hunches sometimes. Besides, there's something wrong about all of this, as I just told you. Each time there's been a hitch when I thought I was safe. First I got clear of the patrol boat. Then we made the island all set to grab the treasure, and got grabbed ourselves. Considine goes on his fake errand, and you get rid of Mallock and the guard, and we make a perfect getaway, and now here is this sea-snake—" She threw out her hands. "It's no use. Each time I'm clear, the noose hauls taut."

Frank said quietly: "And each time the noose hauled taut, you've got clear."

"But that's just the point. I haven't."

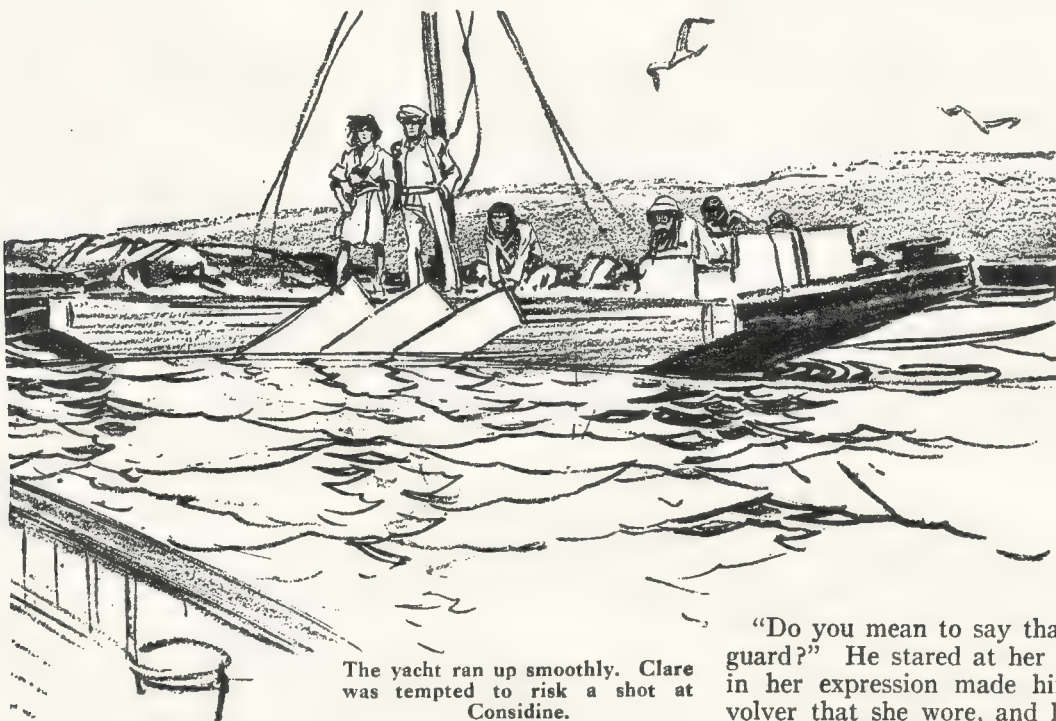
There seemed no answer to this. Frank was silent. The *Caiman* glided as smoothly as if operated by the Director of this whole twilight stage setting, a scenic part of the composition. When her port quarter was presented them the tension began to liberate itself.

"They're all asleep—*ma foi!*" Pierre muttered, and looked at Clare. "But what is your chagrin, mam'selle?"

"I think that he's tormenting us," she said. "You don't catch a weasel asleep."

Then, as if to prove her words, the yacht began to present more of her side. Her foreshortening lengthened, brought their line of vision to a perpendicular dropped on a base-line, then rapidly shortened again to present the *Caiman* bows on as she headed directly for them.

The shock of disappointment fell less heavily on Clare because she had anticipated this *démarche* with certainty. Such intuition had never failed her, and for some reason it was invariably of ill. This was perhaps because one need rarely be warned against sudden happy developments, and then only in the case of an individual who lacks the force to support apparent catastrophe.



The yacht ran up smoothly. Clare was tempted to risk a shot at Considine.

That had never been Clare's difficulty. She was the sort to fight to the bitter end. Pierre was muttering a steady stream of maledictions in a toneless, hopeless way. The young sailor looked at Clare with a sort of doglike reproach.

He said in a dull voice: "Now you've gone and done us in, miss."

She shook her head then tapped the revolver that she had slung around her waist. "You can say that we held you up and forced you to come along."

The yacht ran up smoothly. One of the men forward had the small gun trained on the lighter. Considine himself was at the wheel. He checked his vessel and called: "So this is how you stick to your bargain!"

For a moment Clare was tempted to risk a shot at Considine and take the consequences. The chances are she would have done so if she had been reasonably sure of hitting her target. But she doubted it could help matters much. The man at the gun would have his orders. Another of the crew was standing with his rifle ready. Clare knew that Frank would be the first to suffer.

The yacht was breasting in on them under Considine's maneuvering. Clare shoved her weapon back into its holster. The yacht scraped alongside the lighter, and as she did so, Frank whispered to her:

"Say the word, and we'll shoot it out."

"No use. After all, he'd like nothing better."

This she felt was the truth. Considine would have welcomed the excuse to be finally rid of Frank. From the first, Clare had placed Considine as an incomplete sort of scoundrel who wanted to be ruthless but could not unless stimulated by drugs or drink. He lacked that quality that had made an earlier type of pirate indomitable. He had his inhibitions when not under the influence of some outside agent to paralyze them. More than that, he had need of Frank as a lever to be used in coercing Clare herself.

She had already discovered him to be the sort of man to prefer a cruel and treacherous finesse in playing his hand, rather than a stark brutality and *force majeure*.

The scow scraped gently alongside the yacht. Considine gave a curt order to the young sailor, who caught the lines thrown them and made fast bow and stern. Further resistance being useless, Clare obeyed a mocking invitation to come aboard.

Considine did not attempt to disarm her. He said merely in a tone of reproach: "You agreed to hold to your bargain with me, then managed to break it—although how you did it, I can't imagine."

"You broke your own," Clare retorted. "You promised that I was to be undisturbed, but no sooner had you gone than I was."

"How?" Considine asked.

"This morning your man Mallock came up to the cabin."

"Well—what then?"

"That was all. I was taking no chances with him—nor with the man you detailed to watch me."

"Do you mean to say that you killed Mallock and the guard?" He stared at her in disbelief. Then something in her expression made him reach quickly for the revolver that she wore, and he disarmed her. "My word, but you're even more of a girl than I'd thought, and that's quite a lot."

Clare said hotly: "I knew that you'd lied to me, as soon as you'd gone. You never had the slightest intention of getting my brother freed. All that stuff about having him in with you was a string of lies. The chances are that you left orders with Mallock to frighten me so that I'd be glad to have you back."

Considine shook his head. "No, it was not that. I had a rendezvous—a boat to meet off Trinidad." He turned and gave orders for the lighter to be passed astern and made fast. Then he called one of the men to take the wheel. "Come aft," he said to Clare, and motioned her to the quarter-deck. She saw as she turned that Frank had been taken forward.

Considine motioned her to a wicker chair that was by the rail. He lighted a cigarette and said: "When I shoved off, I really intended to see what I could do about your brother after keeping my rendezvous with this boat that brought out my principal shore agent. For obvious reasons I don't care to be associated in the mind of anybody with a man who runs the risk of being discovered with a large amount of money. That's the way a game like mine is usually broken up."

"Then why didn't you go on?" Clare asked.

"Because my agent had heard something about your brother. He's in a position to know a great deal of what is going on in this region. He told me that your brother was in a very tight place, and that unless something was done about him right away, he was most likely to be shot."

Clare said angrily: "All the more reason for you doing something."

"I've instructed this agent of mine to do all that he can, and that should be a good deal—more than I could manage myself and with much less cost and risk. Besides, if your brother saw fit to refuse my offer, which was not

improbable if he's anything like yourself, he might have found means of making trouble for me."

Clare listened without conviction. Considine would be a smooth and plausible liar. What he had just told her answered her questions, in full explanation of his unexpected return. And then to take her mind from what he had just told her, he asked, as she had expected him to ask:

"But you—how the devil did you manage this escape?"

She said briefly: "This man Mallock started up to the cabin. He met Frank on the way and maltreated him brutally. I saw that, and when he came in the door, I struck him down with the ferule and got his revolver. The guard came then, and there was nothing to do but to shoot them both. It looked to me like a plan of yours to break my spirit—to let Mallock do your dirty work so that I'd be glad to see you back again if only for one sort of protection. I suppose you thought that when it came to the worst, I'd prefer the master to the servant."

Considine shook his head. "No. Such an idea could never have occurred to me. The chances are that Mallock went to the cabin for something that had nothing to do with you. I don't know. Perhaps not." He looked at her thoughtfully. "Mallock's been drinking recently—and getting a bit out of hand. At any rate, I don't blame you for acting as you did. In fact I'm rather glad of it. You may have saved me from doing it myself. And that brings us back to where we started. I did actually what I promised you I'd do, and what I promised not to do. I've taken measures to get your brother out of jail, and I left you Frank. So what about your agreement?"

Clare said bitterly: "There'll be time enough for that when I get proof that what you say is true and that you are going to leave Frank alone."

"That's an indefinite order."

"I can't help it. All I've had from you is a lot of talk. For all I know, you may never have given a thought about my brother, and as soon as I should give in to you, Frank might disappear."

Considine's face darkened. "Well, if that's the way you feel, we'll have to talk about it later." And with this covert threat, he went forward. . . .

The yacht made short work of the run back to the island. Just after darkness fell, Sun Yat spread a little table on the quarter-deck and brought Clare her supper. Scarcely a word passed between her and the Chinaman. It seemed to her as if the events of that stormy day, and even her whole brief sojourn here, was something dreadful that never had happened.

That was like Considine, she reflected. He was the sort to see the advantage of confusing her mind by a rapid al-

ternation of violence and courtesy. His psychology would grasp the value of offering her these violent comparisons. He hoped they might have a sort of bewildering effect so that she would scarcely be able to establish mentally any definite line of conduct and then hold fast to it.

But there was another factor that weighed on her more strongly than that dread of what might happen to herself. There was Frank. He had awakened her pity from the first.

Another of her intuitions told her positively that whatever his past self-acknowledged faults, this man had never committed any criminal act. Clare felt more than ever convinced that Frank's was a clean soul. Also she had received proof that his courage and moral force could be neither bent nor broken.

There are many men able to face a crisis of suffering or danger, even to death by torture, valiantly when in their full strength and health. But for a male human being as crushed and broken as Frank to face such horrors not only valiantly but even cheerfully seemed to border on a heroism that is based on the spiritual.

Clare found, to her surprise, that much of the pity

she had felt for him at first was giving way to another and more profound emotion, that of overwhelming admiration and respect. In a word, as she sat there in the soft velvet darkness and thought about his case, she found herself conferring an apotheosis on this broken convict who had come into her life in so bizarre a fashion. Or if not precisely raising him to a rank that was demi-god, she saw in him at least a man of human qualities more spiritual than physical. It was this former quality that had carried him on through five years of frightful misery, with its conclusion of hardships topped by the excruciating strain of the last few hours. Such valiant effort was more than automatic, as if some deep inexhaustible source was driving on his shattered attenuated frame with no reference to the limits imposed on most men by their physical bodies. . . .

In this state of exaltation her thought of self was swept away. Clare discovered what her emotion for Frank had now become. It was no longer pity, as it had started, nor was it entirely respect or admiration or sympathy or a tremendous liking. It was not maternal. She knew in that moment that it was the sum of these abstract qualities.

This revelation left her for the moment amazed. She had never thought much about love, because her life had been adventurous with the thrills that come of strong and vigorous action. Also she had never yet come in contact with men of the type to inspire thought of love.



He disarmed her. "My word, you're more of a girl than I thought!"

For these reasons Love descended on her now like a horde on a defenseless little city; and the simile will stand, because the horde threatened her destruction. In a rush of exaltation, it seemed as if her way was made clear. Regardless of cost to herself, safety must absolutely be assured to the man to whom she gave her love.

She knew of course that Frank would never accept any such sacrifice. For that reason he must know nothing about it. It did not occur to Clare to wonder if Frank loved her. She knew that he had accepted her as something sweet and wonderful and to be saved at any cost. His love would be of an impersonal sort that verged on religious devotion. He would think himself entirely too low in the scale of human beings to consider the possibility of a proprietary interest in her.

Clare was logical in a purely fundamental way so that her sense of duty to Frank demanded an immediate action upon it.

She said to herself: "Since I know now that I love Frank, my plain duty is to protect him at any cost to my feelings or even to my salvation."

She could see no other way out of it. . . .

The yacht nosed into her moorings in the little bight and came to rest. Considine walked aft to where Clare was sitting.

He said in the courtly voice of a distinguished gentleman whom one could never possibly associate with a ruffian and a bully and a coward:

"You must be terribly done in, Clare." It was the first time he had called her by this name.

She answered briefly: "Well, what now?"

"You had better stop aboard. Sun Yat has made up my cabin for you. You'll be comfortable there."

She asked in a dull voice: "What about Frank?"

"I haven't decided about him yet. That depends a good deal on yourself."

This threat was of the sort she had expected, just as many a captive in her position had in the past expected it.

She said tonelessly: "If I can be certain that Frank's all right, whatever happens to me doesn't greatly matter."

EVEN in the murk, she was aware of his close suspicious scrutiny.

"Why are you so anxious about this man?" he asked.

She made a weary gesture. "Because I've got something that was overlooked in your construction, Considine, and that's a heart."

He appeared to turn this statement in his mind then said curtly: "I wonder. . . . I've never felt the need of one before."

"Well, what about Frank?"

"I'll promise you this: for your sake Frank shall have the very best the place affords. He shall have it from now on, to continue indefinitely."

"How am I to know that?"

"You may see him every day and get his own report."

Clare nodded, then dropped her face in her hands. "All right," she muttered, "in that case—you win. . . ."

Sun Yat showed Clare to the owner's quarters prepared for her. Even aboard a small vessel such accommodations can be comfortable to the point of luxury, and those aboard the *Caiman* were equipped with all the modern devices.

Sun Yat went out, leaving the door closed. Clare had spoken to the Chinaman hardly a word, nor he to her, except to indicate the conveniences of the cabin. She was surprised that Considine had shown no anger against either Pierre or Sun Yat, though he must have known that they had been aids to the escape. No doubt he had taken it for granted that they would escape at the first chance,

since both were being detained and rendering service without pay under penalty of being deported to Guiana and back to China.

Clare was now so exhausted as to be indifferent about what might next happen her. This sort of overpowering physical and nervous fatigue serves often as Nature's anæsthesia to what might otherwise be torment. Refugees of war and other catastrophes, castaways and members of expeditions lost in a wilderness of steaming jungle or scorching sands or bitter Arctic cold are mercifully spared a great deal of suffering and the shock of fearful scenes by this soothing lethargy of exhaustion.

IT was now that way with Clare. She was too tired to care. It seemed to her that what she now faced was not a crisis but a situation. It was not in the nature of a fair fight. In that case one struck at the adversary and was struck at in return. There suggested itself a final expedient. It ought not to be so difficult to kill Considine, Clare reflected in a dispassionate way. The chances were that the results of Considine dead could be no worse than those of Considine alive.

But while able to convict and execute Considine in her mind, Clare was totally unable to consider making away with him as a practical possibility. Any sort of active attempt on his life had now for some reason got entirely beyond Clare's scope. She turned the situation in her mind with a sort of weary disgust. Here was a man no more entitled to consideration than a venomous reptile. He stood as a dreadful menace to herself and to the man she loved. She had every justification for destroying him in whatever way possible, and yet she now found herself unable to do more than arrive at this mental finding about him.

It was at this low ebb of her discouragement that she heard a step outside and a light tap on her door. She knew intuitively that it was Considine, and felt no more emotion than a sort of dull despair, like that of a prisoner who has abandoned hope of reprieve and waits the summons to be led to execution.

The door of her cabin was hooked ajar so that Considine could easily have opened it and entered. Instead he asked: "Why don't you turn in and get some rest, Clare?"

"I don't know. I've been thinking."

"Well, stop thinking and go to bed. I've been thinking too. I've been a brute. I'm beginning to understand a little better."

"Which says what?"

"I'm not going to play pirate any more with you. I want you to understand me better, just as I do you. In the meantime, you're not to worry."

"Is this another of your tricks?"

"No. It's the truth this time. I shan't bother you about it tonight. You're too tired. Tomorrow perhaps, or when you're rested and able to think clearly, I'll try to make you see my position, and to assure you that I'm not altogether the low sort of blackguard I've appeared."

"Let's hope so."

"Well, then, suppose we let it rest for the time being. Good night."

She heard him moving away. Curiously, this unexpected development failed to interest her very much. Just another of his crafty moves, she thought with a sort of tired indifference. . . .

The day was well advanced when Clare awoke. The return to consciousness was slow and bewildering. It was several moments before she was able to locate herself at all. Then gradually as memory struggled back, she was surprised to find herself still with that singular indifference to what might happen next.

She pressed the bell beside the bed, and Sun Yat slithered to the door and rapped.

"What time is it?" Clare asked.

"Pretty near ten o'clock, missus. You sleep pretty good?"

"Yes, thanks. What's going on?"

"All pretty quiet. Captain, he sleep ashore. Nothing happen. I get you some breakfast."

She gave herself up for a few moments longer to a lethargy that was not entirely unpleasant. Then after she had taken the fruit and coffee and biscuits brought by the Chinaman her mind began to resume its normal activity. She found herself able to anticipate what Considine's next line of conduct was apt to be.

The exponent of this man was unquestionably avarice. Clare's coming to the island had disturbed this for the moment. It had made him lose his head. But by this time he would have appreciated that he had had a close escape from ruin, and he would tell himself that no woman, however desirable, was worth that. The chances were that he would move warily from this point and try to convince Clare that when all was said and done he was by no means the utterly bad sort that he had appeared. She had an intuitive ability to assay men and their motives, and it seemed to her that she could read Considine like an open book.

This was a comforting thought, because at least it promised respite. Clare presently went on deck, where she found herself unguarded so far as she could ascertain, but with no means of getting ashore. Sun Yat told her that there was no one else besides themselves aboard. Aside from this information, the Chinaman appeared to have become uncommunicative. Clare felt instinctively that something had happened to interfere with an allegiance that after all had been dictated by self-interest.

The day wore on tiresomely. Clare rested. She tried to read some of the books and magazines on the shelf in the pretty little saloon, but the effort to interest herself was unsuccessful.

Sun Yat served her luncheon on deck under the awning. Then in the middle of the afternoon she saw three men go down to a boat that was beached, and she recognized Considine and Frank and the young sailor. They shoved clear and came presently alongside.

Frank looked better, Clare thought. He gave her a keen questioning glance and asked briefly if she had passed the night restfully.

"Yes," she answered. "How about yourself?"

"Bright enough," he answered shortly.

Considine said with a smile: "I hope that I've managed to convince Frank that my temporary insanity is over. Such things happen to a man sometimes when he's been under a long continued strain. I'm not really the sort you both have every reason to suppose."

THEY seated themselves in wicker chairs. Clare and Frank were silent, awaiting Considine's next move. He said easily: "If we can manage to strike off the records about that's happened here, we'll get along much better."

"For how long?" Clare asked.

"Until I can finish my work here. It depends a good deal on Pierre."

Frank asked: "Is Pierre willing to carry on?"

"I think so. The old fellow's entirely wrong about me. He thought I meant to hold out on him. I suppose he told you all that."

Clare nodded.

"Well, as a matter of fact, he had some reason," Considine said. "I've never paid him his share that I promised, because I was afraid that if he had his money, he

might try to leave me in the case of some vessel coming here. For the same reason I've not permitted him to leave the island. There's something to be said on my side. Pierre would ask nothing better than to take what's coming to him up to now and clear out for good. He can do that, with more than enough to keep him comfortable for the rest of his life. But it would mean my having to close down and destroy my plans and get out myself before I'm ready."

"What have you done about it?" Clare asked.

"I've paid him off, and Sun Yat also; but I'm not yet ready for them to go ashore."

"It strikes me, Considine," Frank said, "that you're living on a volcano. Why don't you cash in and get out while the quitting's good?"

Considine smiled. "Call it greed; but I've set my heart on a certain figure, and that ought to be managed within the next two or three months. Everything was going well enough until you two landed, and I lost my head like a crazy fool."

"We're still here," Clare reminded him.

"That's not my fault. I didn't ask you to come. I'd ask nothing better now than to be able to set you both ashore on the nearest point of transportation."

"Won't you take our paroles?" Frank asked.

CONSIDINE shook his head. "Not after what's happened."

"Then all that about wanting me to act as one of your agents was just a stall," Frank said.

"Not entirely. It seemed to me that a man in your position ought to feel glad for a chance of an offer like mine. But on thinking it over I decided that it would be too risky."

"Don't you think," Clare asked, "that we're a lot more danger to you here held as prisoners than we would be ashore held by our words?"

"Well," said Considine, "you've seemed to have proved that such must be the case, but I've got a different idea about it now."

"What's that?" Frank asked.

"Just this. It sometimes happens in an unlawful traffic of my sort that one is required to make it worth while to somebody who finds out what's going on to keep still about it. At first I couldn't bear the thought of doing this—handing out a share to persons who hadn't contributed in any way to the enterprise. But it seems to me now that you're entitled to compensation for what you've unfortunately had to go through."

"In other words, you mean hush-money for what we've been through and may still have to go through," Frank said.

"Well, why not? Here you are, an escaped convict from Guiana, and a girl bankrupt from the loss of her schooner—because I really don't think there's any chance of your getting possession of her again. Even with the best of intentions, that crowd aboard have got no other choice than to abandon her. They're apt to beach her or sink her, not only for the escape, but to save them getting hanged, if caught."

"If they tell what really happened," Frank said, "and then it proved to be fact, they won't be."

"Well, even that won't help Clare much if the schooner is destroyed. But what I'm offering you now is compensation for your detention here until my work is finished. Enough to give you both a start. In that way you see my offer is not hush-money, but damages. I'd make it enough to include the violence you've both suffered at our hands."

Frank looked at Clare. "What do you think?"

"It looks like a case of take it or do without," she said; "but the question is how are we to be sure that we're going to get it?"

"That's easy," Considine answered. "Even after I break up here, your evidence would be enough to get me collared

he's destroyed his evidence and got away from here. A good criminal lawyer could give us the laugh."

"I don't see that, Frank."

"Stop a moment and think: What would charges preferred by an escaped convict and a girl who was beating it away, with a yacht-load of contraband and her brother jailed, be worth? Where could we get other witnesses? How much would the British law worry about counterfeit of other countries alleged to have been made on an island of her maritime provinces, when no evidence of such an act



"Not through, but into," Frank said. "See for yourself!" And he tugged up the bandage.

and convicted, probably. But naturally you'd not be apt to do it if you were satisfied with your share. I should place it at twenty-five thousand dollars apiece. If you'll agree, I'll pay it to you now."

Clare's mind felt confused again. She looked at Frank, but could find no indication of what he thought. Considine saw their indecision and rose. "I'll leave Frank here to talk it over with you. Do you think you can come to a decision in an hour or so?"

Frank seemed about to speak, but Clare interrupted him. She felt at that moment that she would agree to anything for the sake of an hour alone with Frank.

"It's a hard thing to decide," she said. "If we should agree, may we have the liberty of this place without any guards until you finish here?"

Considine smiled. "I don't dare agree to that, when you've shown yourselves to be so—well, call it so resourceful. I should want you at least to sleep out here aboard the schooner and Frank to resume his quarters with Pierre. But you needn't fear any disturbance."

"All right," Frank said curtly. "We'll talk it over, then."

Considine rose, nodded slightly and went back to the boat. As soon as he was out of earshot, Frank said: "Now I wonder what he's got up his sleeve."

Clare shook her head. "It sounds plausible to me. We really could make it hot for him ashore."

"That's just the point," Frank said. "We couldn't, once

could be discovered on that island? What about the project of making a tire-rubber substitute? Then it's most likely that Considine himself has not passed off any of this fake money personally. I doubt if we'd have much of a case even if a patrol boat were to put in here right now. They'd sight her in time to sink the evidence for your story and mine. . . . Good Lord, I wouldn't dare tell any story, or it would be back to Guiana for mine."

Clare stared at him helplessly. "Do you think Considine knows all that?"

"Of course he does. That's the sort of thing a mind like his would fasten to. That offer of his is just a stall."

"But why take the trouble?" she objected. "He doesn't have to stall."

"No," Frank admitted. "He could knock me in the head and heave me overboard whenever he chooses, and you're equally in his power. He merely wants to keep us quiet and as contented as we can be. For the sake of our own comfort, and because there's nothing else to do about it, we might as well tell him that we agree."

"Do you think he would actually pay us this money now," Clare asked, "—and that it would be real money?"

"Very likely. Why not? All he has to do when he gets ready to clear out is to take it away from us again."

"Do you still think I'm in danger from him?"

Frank gave her a bleak look. "I hate to say it, but I think that you're more in danger of him than before. But in a different way."

"What do you mean?"

"The man's a sort of devil. He's the kind to enjoy the refinement of persecution. He tried to master you physically and failed. That was not his stuff, and he knows it. He'll try now to wear you down by a sort of refined third degree, and that would be his meat."

"But he doesn't need to, and he knows that."

"What do you mean?"

"He wore me down last night. . . ."

"What!" Frank sprang to his feet, his face suddenly white and his eyes glowing like hot coals.

"Oh, not that! I—I made another bargain with him."

"What sort of a bargain? About me?"

Clare nodded. For some reason that she had not been able to understand, the look of horror in Frank's face had been a sort of balm to her. She said in a pleading tone:

"I couldn't help it, Frank. I simply couldn't endure the thought of your being made to suffer any more. There are limits to endurance."

"And you offered to let him have his way with you out of pity for me? By God, if I'd known that, I'd have gone overboard and straight to bottom and stayed there!"

"But it wasn't pity, Frank," she protested. "I no longer pity you. How can I pity a man like you? If there was any pity in it, it was for myself."

"Then if it wasn't pity, what else could it be? What else could a girl like you possibly feel for a broken, degraded escaped convict like myself?"

HE was on his feet staring down at her, and again Clare had a curious sense of him as of a tremendous force; a vitality emancipated from the mere limitations of its earthy vehicle. He impressed her as some sort of spirit that had been smelted pure and clean, transcending mortality.

But the question he asked her struck a flash of anger because its tone was of a withering self-contempt. It was precisely as if Frank was on the verge of wrath with her for the intimation that she might possibly possess a warmer sentiment than pity for him.

This gave Clare a sort of tender emotion peculiar to mothers who watch indulgently the blind errors of their children. Frank had seemed often to her like a pitiful child, and it was his sudden transformation from this that had so startled her.

She considered him thoughtfully. "I shall feel whatever I like for you. I liked you from the start. It was plain enough to me that you had been somebody's scapegoat—a voluntary one."

He did not look at her but stared gloomily over the rail then said: "At the end of five years at Guiana, it doesn't matter much what one was deported for."

"Oh, but it must."

"Not in most cases. After a few choice cuts and a chunk of rotten beef have been in the garbage bucket and set out in the sun, there's nothing to choose between them. You overrate me, Clare, because we've made a common cause of it."

"No," she said softly. "I rate you at the rank you belong because you've made an uncommon cause of it. You've driven your body without the slightest regard either to your strength or the danger of fresh torments. I thought Ivan was a strong man, but he looks now to me like a schoolboy compared to you."

Clare steered around anything in the nature of a declaration. The moment had not come for it. Frank must first fight his way back into the boundaries of self-re-

spect. So she stepped aside from personalities: "Then you think we'd better tell this cheap fraud that we accept his offer?"

"Why not? We can stall along in the hope of getting a break."

"What sort of break?"

"Well, I should say Ivan was as good a bet as any."

"What can Ivan do alone?" Clare asked. "It would be weeks before the men with him could be of any use."

"I'm not so sure. Anybody that can weather out Guiana—"

"You're young. They've got neither your youth nor your force of will."

He gave his thin smile. "What you call my force of will is sheer mulishness. That's what has always got me into trouble to start with, so it's only fair that it should work both ways and haul me out again."

"Things look better," she said.

"Yes, because this marionette pirate has got himself a new rôle. I fancy you'll be safe enough until he plays it out."

"Of course I'll be safe enough," Clare told him reassuringly. "The most vital thing now is for you to get back where you belong, not only physically but in your feeling for yourself. Try to pretend that Guiana is all a bad dream. Don't worry about me. I was all in last night. Considine missed his chance. The disappointment floored me. But a night's rest has brought back all I've got, and a little more."

Frank nodded. "Nature came to my rescue the same way. I had a hunch he'd change his tactics—play the magnanimous captor. He's a sort of cheap actor. He showed at the start that all his Spanish Main stuff rang false."

"The worst of it is," Clare said, "that I managed our getaway so badly. Sailing that scow smack into him!"

"You couldn't help that. The tub couldn't sail any way except before the wind. Besides, there was no reason to think he was going to make a short hitch and turn back again."

"What worries me," Clare said, "is our lost prestige with Pierre and Sun Yat and the other three. I could have managed lots better."

"I don't see how. The chances are those three did a little looting before we shoved off—some of the counter-feit stuff, I mean."

"Well, it's no use holding a post-mortem."

They changed the topic to what might have happened to the schooner and her crew. Frank did not believe that Ivan would abandon the yacht.

"They've got plenty of stores and water, and they couldn't have a better place to rest and recuperate. I can't see why anybody should try to board and overhaul them if Ivan keeps out of the more important ports. He'd do that, anyway."

"They can't sail round forever," Clare said.

"They can sail around long enough to get on their feet again. The men were suffering from the exhaustion of that cayuga voyage; and as you say, they're older, and it takes them longer to get back."

"And what then?"

"It's hard to say. Ivan is able and intelligent, but—" He hesitated.

"I know what you mean. There's something in the back of his head."

Frank nodded. "He's got some *idée fixe*, as the French say. I can't imagine what that may be, but I don't think he'd let you down to put it through. Ivan's key-word is



a sense of obligation. He told me once that it went against all his natural instincts and principles to go after those three men and to get them. But he felt himself bound to do that thing and so he simply set himself aside until he had managed it. Then he turned around and gave himself up. He counted on getting '*passé le tabac*' and he did."

"What's that?"

"The French third degree. To make him tell the workings of it. He'd counted on the guillotine, and would have got it too, if the three men he killed hadn't been what they were."

"Well, there's not much that I can see to hope from Ivan."

"No, I'm afraid not. Considine keeps a bright look-out here. This boat could sink the schooner about as easily as she could sink that scow of ours."

"There's one thing he might do and that's to write to the B.W.I. Government to say that we are held prisoners here."

Frank shook his head. "He might do that, but I doubt it."

"Why?"

"Because he'd be afraid that might lead to my getting shipped back to Guiana. For some reason Ivan was very fond of me."

They talked a little longer, weighing plans that were obviously futile.

"I've seen a good many strong spirits broken—fine well-tempered ones," mused Frank.

"Are you thinking of Guiana?"

"To some extent. Ivan got me away from there just in time. Constant pressure focused on the same point is terrible. To give an illustration: I once had a thoroughbred field dog. He was a splendid dog, with all the traits of a courageous high-spirited gentleman; and incidentally while not quarrelsome, he was a terrific fighter. A neighbor had a miserable ill-tempered poodle. This dog started in to bully mine, and the first time, he got thoroughly beaten. After that, he kept on with his bullying tactics. He'd waylay my dog and spring out and snarl and snap at him, and then retreat before he got chewed up. It began to get on my dog's nerves; and this poodle knew it, and never let up on him, but always avoided a finish fight. In the end he got my dog so nervous that it broke down his morale, so that he didn't dare leave the stoop. A straight example of continued nagging that always shirked the final issue."

"Your dog had only himself to think about. If you had been in danger, he'd have acted differently—killed the poodle."

"There's something in that," he admitted. "Here's an instance. My stepmother was a high-spirited fearless woman, and sweet. For a long time she resisted her husband's bullying, but in the end he wore her down. Then when he had got her morale subjected, he began to maltreat her physically. . . . That's what landed me in Guiana."

"And that also was what helped you to resist Guiana."

"Yes, you're right; but I couldn't have resisted it much longer. Still, it prepared me in a way for this."

Clare nodded. She knew why Frank had given her this



She laid her hand on his forehead, and he closed his eyes. Again that inconsistent pity stabbed Clare.

story. It was a warning to be always on her guard—to keep her deadline sharply drawn.

He said presently: "I've been thinking about what you told me—that after all, there are certain sacrifices that may be justified by circumstances. Clare, I don't think that's true."

It was on the tip of her tongue to say: "It's not true for oneself. It would have to be for the sake of another." But she restrained herself. It would not do to let Frank know that she stood ready to sacrifice herself for him. Instead she said: "You're right. But I do think that if a woman is driven to the last ditch, then loses her fight through no fault of her own, it's foolish for her to admit that everything is lost for her beyond repair. That's to concede too much to the enemy."

Frank reflected for a moment. "Yes, there's something in that. I've often thought that Virginius was all wrong in stabbing his own daughter rather than see her wed a tyrant. Also that Lucretia was a bit of a slacker to kill herself because of Tarquin. A bigger woman would have taken a hand in doing for him, and then considered the account written off."

"Yes, it's always seemed to me that motive is what counts. For that very reason I think you're all wrong about yourself. You're like Lucretia, in a sense, because you feel yourself so degraded by Guiana as to become indifferent about whatever happens to you."

Frank said slowly: "I hadn't thought of that. Once more perhaps you're right."

She went on eagerly: "Of course I'm right. What about the women of ancient times who were the helpless victims of invading hordes—when loot and rapine was the regular military custom in the case of a fallen city? What about the Sabine women and the victims of Christian persecution? The point is this, that if one's body suffers violence through no fault of one's own, it's an insult to the soul to say that that's been ruined also, and therefore that it requires another crime, like suicide, to cleanse it. In other words it's the equivalent of saying that some devil who may have been the master of the body was also the captain of one's soul. That would apply to you, Frank, and it would have applied to me if Considine had got the best of me and then I'd turned around and killed myself." She leaned forward and said hotly: "Let me tell you that if

anything of that sort should ever happen to me, I'd kill the man first if I had to lose my own life doing it."

Frank looked at her with a glow in his eyes. The tonic words seemed to have brought back a flash of the animation that had fired him the day before.

She drove this point even harder: "You were giving your dog as an example: There's another reason for his breakdown. A dog is neither a wild animal nor a human one. That could not happen to a wild animal nor to a high-class human. All wild animals are thoroughbreds. Did you ever think of that?"

"No. But it's true. What about it?"

"Because they are thoroughbreds, they don't give up—at least not the fang and claw species. A wild-animal mother might lure an enemy from a wounded mate. But she would never give up when cornered. She'd turn and fight against any odds."

Frank looked a little confused. "What are you driving at?"

"Just this." She leaned forward and dropped a hand on his bony wrist, for he had seated himself again. "Now that I've got back some of your self-respect, you might as well know how I feel about this. It's as if we were wild-animal mates surrounded by a pack of wolves, and you badly wounded."

He gripped the arms of the wicker chair. "That's all wrong. We're not wild animals, and we could never possibly be mates."

"You might as well know how I feel, if only to help get back your self-respect, Frank." She leaned still closer, and it seemed to the shattered wasted man that he had never looked at anyone of such sheer vital beauty. She went on, slowly:

"We are going to fight, and to fight, and to keep on fighting. We are going to break through this horrible jam, as we have before! Both of us! It's not going to be any more the idea of one of us trampled into the dust to save the other. Maimed or unmaimed, we are going to get away. And then if there's a score to be settled, whether yours or mine, we're going to come back again and settle it in full. That will be the price paid, no matter how high or how unpayable it may seem for the moment."

"God, Clare! You've got it right. You've said the whole of it. You were never made to be the victim of a cur like Considine. If ever a woman was pure gold with a core of steel, you're that woman."

Clare looked toward the shore. "There's no base metal in you, Frank. . . . And now we've got to start by stalling. Here he comes to get his answer."

Considine may have felt the high tension as he came aft to where the two were sitting. He looked suspiciously from one to the other.

"Well, have you come to a decision?" His pale eyes rested on Clare's flushed face.

"Yes," she answered. "We accept your offer."

"That's wise," he said. He shifted his scrutiny to Frank and his look of suspicion deepened. "You two have the look of hatching some fresh forlorn hope."

Frank said with a return of his early flippancy: "To

quote the poet Rostand: 'There is always a nightingale in the forest, just as there is always hope in the soul of a man!'"

"Well, why not?" said Considine. "After all, it's not such a bad break for an escaped Guiana convict and a young lady who has paid her entire fortune for an act of mercy, to be offered a good stake in a growing concern, only to keep their mouths shut about it."

He was plainly in an ugly mood. Before either of them spoke, he said sharply: "What's all this rot I hear about Frank being shot through the brain?"

"Not through but into," Frank said. "See for yourself." He tugged up the bandage and exposed what now

gave the appearance of a round angry bullet-hole with gray matter in its center. Almost anybody would have believed the brain tissue was protruding slightly, and even Considine was obviously startled. He stared at this prodigy for a moment a good deal as Pierre had done, then stepped to Frank and examined the wound more closely. Even then he could not have guessed the real nature of the injury. It looked precisely like a hole from a large bullet fired point blank. The effect of this was enhanced by some smaller spark-burns round the circumference, as if by powder grains, where the live particles of the cheroot had scattered.

Considine drew back, staring at Frank with a sort of bewildered disbelief. "What sort of a man are you, anyhow?" he muttered.

Clare said: "There are some men who can defy death, Considine—or to put it differently, whom murderers cannot kill."

Frank drew his bandage back again, it seemed to Considine's relief. He said in a slightly muffled voice: "Well, I once saw a case like that in the war, but the man wasn't walking around."

"Perhaps he didn't have to walk around," Clare said. "Even war has its quality of mercy."

Considine quickly answered: "I think I'm showing that."

"Yes, for the moment."

"Well, it all depends on you how long it lasts."

"Does that mean what I do or what I don't try to do?"

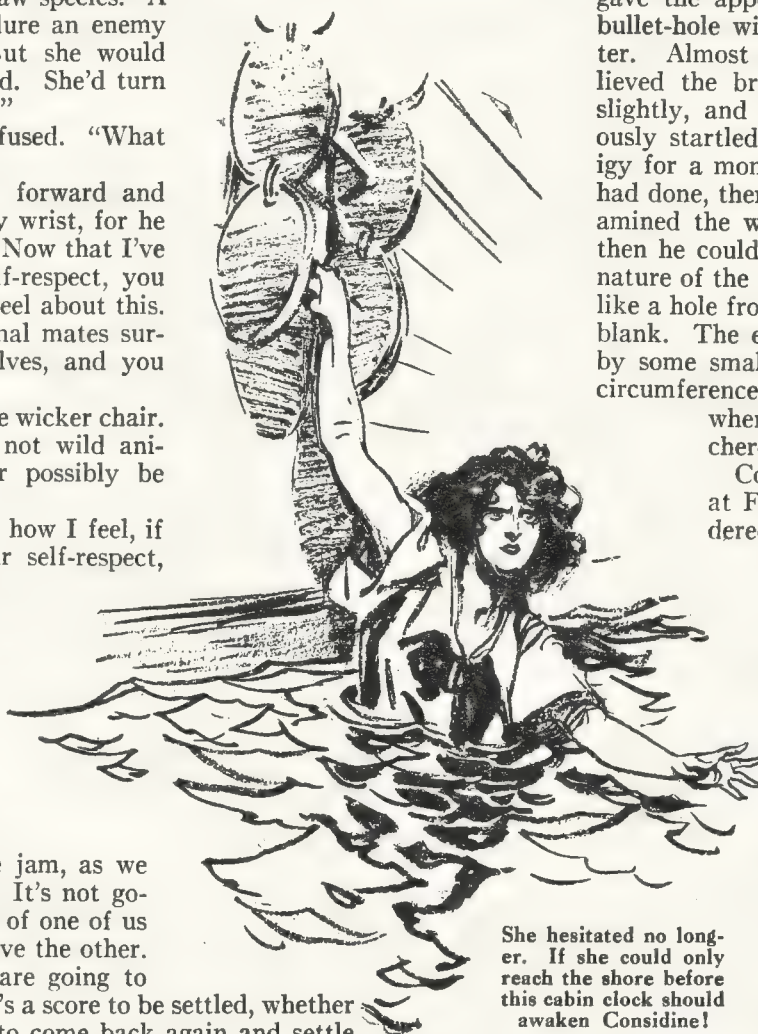
"It means the latter—that you make no further attempts at escape and stop killing people for no better reason than their trying to serve you in some harmless way."

"Very well. Then it's a bargain. I still think, though, that you're making a mistake in keeping us here."

"How so?"

"Because as our relations stand, Frank and I are willing to call it a draw and get out of here and keep our mouths shut. But as long as you insist on keeping us, we are a source of danger to you and stand to cost you fifty thousand dollars if you keep your word."

Considine looked at her with a flash of admiration. "My word, but you're a cool hand! I'm more than ever



She hesitated no longer. If she could only reach the shore before this cabin clock should awaken Considine!

sorry that we started off so badly. It's enough to make me swear off drink. I suppose I'll have a hard time proving I'm not such a bad sort under ordinary circumstances."

"Your trying to sink my schooner doesn't check with that," she said.

A spasm of impatience showed in Considine's face. It was actually a high-bred handsome face, with good features, and nothing particular to mar it but the pallid eyes with their pinpoint pupils. He said in a sort of angry protest: "I've already told you the truth about that. When we saw you coming in, we didn't know what to expect. I went out aboard and cleared the gun. There was nothing hostile about that. I shouldn't have fired until I knew what you were up to. Your spinning around in your tracks and heading out again full-bore was naturally suspicious. But even then I didn't shoot to hit, but merely to heave you to. You weren't hit, were you?"

"No," Clare answered. She did not believe Considine's story, but still the fact remained that the schooner had not been struck.

"Well, there you are. And yet you insist that I was trying to sink you."

"You told us that yourself," Frank said.

CONSIDINE turned with a baleful expression in his eyes. "I wanted to intimidate you. That was my first wrong move, I may as well admit. I didn't know with whom I had to deal. A girl who would fly at me like a tigress before I'd made any effort to lay hands on her, and afterward shoot and kill my two best men because they walked up to the cabin to ask if there was anything they could do for her! Also,"—his voice had a covert sneer,— "a walking skeleton of a cultivated convict that could take a .45 slug in his gray matter and carry on as if it were no more than a tap of a girl's fan."

The brief silence between them was broken by Considine, who said in a resumption of his quiet, well-bred tone: "Suppose we try to set aside what's happened and see if we can't go on peaceably from here." He looked at Frank. "You'd better go ashore and lie down. I don't pretend to be a surgeon, so it's hard for me to understand how you're still alive. But I don't think you will be very long if you move about. Pierre will look after you."

This suggestion was of course in the nature of a command, and a reasonable one, at that. Frank rose, nodded to Clare, then walked amidships and went overside into the boat. At an order from Considine, it shoved off and pulled back to the beach.

Considine took off his sun helmet and dropped wearily into the wicker chair.

"The age of miracles is not past," he said. "What must I do to convince you that I have my redeeming qualities?" She said briefly: "You seem to be making a good start."

"Thanks for that much. If I hadn't been in such a ragged state of nerves when you landed here, I'd have started then. You've really no idea what a strain it is to run a game like mine."

"I can imagine it," she said. "All the more reason for your winding it up while you're the heavy winner."

"I know that. Call it avarice or obstinacy or anything you like, but I'm set on reaching the mark I've placed, the figure I've put as paying for such tremendous lot of risk and cost and effort. I'll tell you something, Clare, and if you don't believe it, I can prove it to you."

"I'll take your word for it."

"Well, then, I'm one of those hard-bitten soldiers of fortune that you read about in fiction, and that the movies are so fond of exploiting. Now that my elder brother is dead, I've come into a title and a patch of ragged moor and gorse and bracken, and an old semi-ruined castle of

sorts on the west coast of Ireland. My ambition is to get out of all this with enough to go back and put the moldy old estate in some sort of order. Then I can take the place that I am entitled to as an Irish country gentleman."

Clare said with a tinge of mockery: "It sounds like a good old-fashioned melodrama."

He ignored her tone. "It hasn't been very romantic—not so far. When you came, I might have made it so. But I went and spoiled it all. I tell you, Clare, I'd give an awful lot if that could be undone."

She said in the same cool voice: "It doesn't so much matter what you've done as what you are."

"That's true enough," he agreed, putting on her statement the interpretation that pleased him. "Decent men enough sometimes do fearful things under conditions of some unusual sort. When you came, I'd been here for weeks, without setting foot ashore. I hadn't seen a woman of any sort for months."

"A solitary man ought to welcome harmless visitors. Yet the first thing you did was to strike down Frank."

"I was in a rage at your schooner getting away after we'd fired. It seemed to me that the gaff was blown, that I might well slide my gear overboard and clear. It was unfortunate to have had that happen—the only afternoon when the *Caiman* was crippled."

"Why did you run past us last evening before rounding to?"

"We just happened to sight you then. That big high-sided scow bulked up against the sky."

There was nothing to prove his answers untrue. Yet she had no belief in any of them.

But there was no profit in antagonizing him. She said merely: "Well, that's a relief—to feel that you're not the ruffian you've seemed to want to show yourself. I may have been wrong about you. I never have blamed you much for our fight, because you were drunk. What I've hated you for was your striking down poor Frank for no reason at all."

"That was pretty bad, but there was a reason," Considine said promptly just as she had known he would. "I asked you why the schooner had come here, and as you hesitated, Frank popped out his answer, that you had come for water. I didn't believe that, because I didn't know then that you had an escaped convict crew. This would be the last spot where anybody would have looked for water, with Trinidad and Granada and other places so close by. I knocked Frank down because I knew he was trying to fool me."

Here it was again, Clare reflected: always the glib reasonable answer. One could no more put one's finger on this man's lying than on a globule of quicksilver.

Considine might be clever, but Clare was instinctive or intuitive. The siege had begun, she perceived.

THERE began then for Clare precisely the sort of protracted ordeal that she had anticipated. Day after day the sun rose from the sea, climbed over the zenith and eased itself down into the sea again. She continued to occupy Considine's quarters aboard the schooner and he to sleep ashore, though coming off to lunch and dine with her.

During and after these meals, she was obliged not only to listen to his arguments, but in some degree to show herself responsive. She did not want to risk his becoming immediately discouraged. Sometimes late in the afternoons they went ashore, and Considine walked with her over the rough terrain. This usually had the compensation of a gorgeous sunset. But for a girl of Clare's temperament, a sunset would be colored very largely by the companion with whom it was admired.

A greater compensation was that she saw Frank every day, though always when in Considine's company, and it was worth all the rest for her to observe that his health and strength were rapidly returning. He was not required to do any work at all, but was saved despondency by becoming immediately interested in Pierre's research work on the rubber substitute.

This was the saving of Frank, Clare perceived. His Lycée courses had included a certain amount of chemistry, and he had been gifted with a creative mind. The laboratory was precisely the stimulus that he now required.

A FORTNIGHT passed. Considine, whatever the tax to his patience, kept his agreement not to intrude on Clare's privacy except mentally, and then for but two or three hours a day. She was surprised to discover that these contacts were not entirely disagreeable. This was partly because the rest of the time hung so heavily.

She could not read always, and her active mind required some sort of intellectual occupation. Considine did not try to make love to her. Impersonally he was a good talker, a well-informed man, and sometimes during their discussions Clare almost forgot the anomalous position in which they stood, until some personality injected would remind her.

Then on the afternoon of the fifteenth day since her frustrated attempt at escape, she was aware of a change in Considine. He had come off aboard for tea with her at five o'clock. She noticed an even more accentuated paleness in his eyes, and remembering what Frank had told her, she saw that the pupils were scarcely perceptible. He had complained the day before of feeling badly, ascribing it to the heat.

The next forbidding symptom was a sort of incoherence in his speech, less in its articulation than in a vagueness of idea. There was a blurred quality to his expression usually so exact, and he seemed less suave. It was plain enough that he had exceeded whatever the limit usually observed in his narcotics.

For the first time since the armistice she began to feel frightened, and presently when he proposed the usual walk ashore, she said with an attempt at firmness: "Not today, Considine. I've a headache."

He did not insist, but what struck her as more ominous, he clapped his hands to summon Sun Yat and said to the Chinaman:

"Signal for the boat and go ashore and relieve the man on look-out at the mole until you're relieved yourself." And then to Clare: "Everybody is under the weather today. I think there's a storm brewing. The glass is low."

This Clare knew to be the fact, but the pretext did not deceive her.

When the boat had come and taken the Chinaman ashore, Considine said to Clare: "I feel very ill. I think I've got fever."

"Then you'd better go ashore and lie down," she advised. He shook his head.

"No, I can't stand being alone. I had a devilish night. Wild crazy dreams alternating with wakefulness and what the French call '*pensées noires*.' I need a bit of nursing."

"What do you want me to do?"

"I'd like to stretch out in the saloon and have you sit beside me and talk to me."

"I'm afraid that wouldn't entertain you very much. I'm pretty well burned out."

"You've burned me out," Considine said thickly. "I tell you I can't stand this any longer."

In that moment Clare could not see much hope for ultimate escape, but at least she did not intend to be the prey of this narcotized whiner. She thought of Frank and how

his will had rallied to make his body serve its demands, with that body scarcely more than an animated skeleton. If only she could manage now to get to Frank, she felt that this crisis might be faced, whatever happened afterward. Considine appeared to realize that she was summoning her worn reserves in a desperate effort to rally them. He made another and more faulty move.

Before she was aware of his intention, he stepped to the side of her chair, took her in his arms and drew her close. With a strength which at that moment she was unable to resist, he crushed his face against her own. Even the brief moment of his holding her in this physical contact was enough to strike a sudden nausea through Clare.

"We'd better go below," she said. "I think you're really a very sick man, Considine. The strain of all this was bound to get you sooner or later."

She rose and led the way to the companionway. Considine stood staring at her for a moment with a sort of startled disbelief, then followed her down and into the saloon. Clare motioned to one of the transoms, on which was the usual pallet. "Stretch out under the air from the skylight. You look very faint. Shall I get you a little cognac?"

"I scarcely dare. You know what that does to me."

"I'm not afraid. I've got past that. You seem to me to be very ill."

He gave her a startled, suspicious look. "Ill of what?"

"Exhaustion, perhaps. Heat and strain and fretting over me. You're not invulnerable any more than anybody else."

Considine eyed her, then asked abruptly:

"Clare, will you marry me as soon as we can get out of here? At the first port?"

She nodded. "Yes, if we go soon."

"I'll go tomorrow, if you'll give me your promise."

Clare sat down beside him. It would not do to seem to be in haste. She was falling back on strategy now, to get through this last and in a way most horrid crisis.

"Perhaps you're right. After all, I've about decided that you're more to be pitied than feared, Considine. There seems to be some sort of relentless devil driving you."

"That's it," he said eagerly. "That's precisely it. You understand, Clare. In fact, I'd say that you're the first that ever has understood."

For a moment a sort of sincere pity swept over Clare.

She laid her hand upon his forehead, and he closed his eyes. Again that inconsistent pity stabbed into Clare. Her involuntary maternal instinct made it almost hard to trick him as she meant to do.

"Try to doze a little," she said.

THE contact of her light touch must have been infinitely soothing to Considine. It was the first time in their association that Clare had shown for him any kindness at all. His eyes closed. His strained features seemed to relax. Clare continued to stroke lightly his forehead and his short crisp wavy hair. She found herself strangely affected by the alteration in his face.

This would not do. She was letting herself feel not a pretended pity, but a real one for this distracted soul. The tremendous fund of the maternal in her was reacting to what had started as merely temporizing ministrations.

She said softly: "Considine."

"Yes," he answered drowsily.

"Will you try to sleep?"

"Yes, as long as you sit here beside me. God knows I need sleep, and this would be the first natural sort—" He paused.

Clare knew what was in his mind, that it would not be a natural sleep but the nearest to it he could hope to find.

She continued her stroking of his head. Then presently glancing at him, she saw from the flaccid relaxation of his features that he had fallen into a doze.

She stopped presently and sat beside him almost breathlessly. Considine slept on. But Clare scarcely dared to move. Her mind began to race like a motor with the clutch thrown out. All sorts of expedients suggested themselves to her, but there was no thought of injury to Considine. The fact that she had voluntarily given him this solace made it now impossible for her to do him injury.

Clare looked again at Considine, then rose silently. She thought of the brass ship's clock on the bulkhead, which was of the sort that struck the bells half-hourly. It was now within nineteen minutes of five bells—half-past six. She knew that the sharp ringing directly over his head would be certain to wake Considine.

She did not dare go up the main companionway, but stole silently out past her own cabin and up the pantry ladder to the deck. The sun had set, and low in the eastern sky the great moon was already brilliant.

The only boat available was over on the beach. The yacht was at a mooring no great distance out, a matter of two hundred yards, perhaps. Clare stole to the open skylight and looked down. She could see Considine still sleeping, and she saw the clock. In seven minutes, now, he would certainly awake.

She looked at the shore. There was nobody in sight. The men had trooped off for their supper, or might have gone to their quarters. The day was fading, as in the tropics it seems to do, in pulsating waves of lessened light like the darkening of a great theater when the circuits are turned off consecutively. Again there swept over Clare that irresistible urge to be with Frank.

She went to the boat ladder and let herself down to the water's edge, then looked again at the shore. At this moment a familiar figure came out of the laboratory and moved slowly down toward the beach.

It was Frank, and it seemed to Clare that he had been drawn by her tremendous need of him. As she waited there, he came to where the boat was lying, then looked round as if to see if he were being watched. It was evident to Clare that he was considering the chance of getting out to the *Caiman* unobserved. Perhaps he had seen the Chinaman taken ashore and knew that Clare was alone with Considine—and could not endure that thought.

She hesitated no longer. She lowered herself into the limpid water and started to swim for the beach. In that part of the West Indies there was no danger of sharks, though a marine peril was to be found on many beaches from the savage barracuda.

Then, almost at the beach, she heard distantly the tingling of the ship's clock. The next minute her feet



A scream burst from Clare. "Oh, Frank! It's the *Jacana*!"

grounded, and she looked up to see Frank staring at her with his face pallid in the low light.

"Good God, Clare! What's happened?" he whispered.

"Nothing. I left him asleep in the saloon. He's full of opium again."

"I was afraid of that."

"Frank, let's get away somewhere, if only for an hour, until they find us. I had to be near you. This time I think I'm done for—but I had to see you first."

Frank took her hand and they hurried along the water's edge toward the end of the beach in the direction of where they had found the treasure-chest. As they ran along, Clare looked repeatedly back over her shoulder. There was no outcry from the yacht, nor was there any commotion from the cabin where the men were quartered. The pressure of Frank's hand gave Clare a tremendous and unreasonable sense of courage and security.

In the same strange lack of discovery and of pursuit they reached the end of the beach. They scrambled around the base of the rough eroded rocks, sometimes plunging waist-deep into the water. Clare's panic had for the moment been contagious for Frank.

Hidden by the low rocky promontory, they climbed up through a fissure and got on the higher ground in the little swale where the treasure was hidden. In the same frantic impulse to get away as far as the narrow limits of the island could afford, they were both driven on. They skirted the mole, and on its farther side paused for breath to stand panting, hand in hand and staring at each other. Clare gave a short hysterical laugh.

Frank said in a muffled voice:

"Let's go to the top. Let's pass the short time we've got together on the heights."

This expression stabbed into Clare like a point of flame. She flung her arm around his neck and drew his face against hers. Their lips met and clung in a throbbing rapture like the greeting and last farewell embrace of Orpheus and Eurydice. There was no longer any protest on Frank's part. He clasped her dripping body to his own as if nothing that might happen had any longer the least importance compared to this last communion.

But this fusing contact was brief as a meteor's flight. As if long in its course and brilliance, while shortly spaced in elapsed time, they loosed each other and stood for a moment listening, their hands tightly clasped. Then Clare murmured:

"We will do as you said. Let's pass what time is left us together—*on the heights*."

They started their upward climb on the side of the mole away from the colony. Slipping and stumbling on the dry spongy turf, and getting foothold on the rocky outcrops, they attacked the steep slope breathlessly, as if racing for some precious prize on the summit. The sooner they reached the summit, the more time they would have to spend together before being violently torn apart.

The mole was not very high, two hundred feet perhaps, and presently reaching its top, they found that it was cupped in a sort of saucer-shaped basin where the turf grew more thickly. By this time the tropic sunset had spent itself, so that even the high film of cirrus cloud had turned to gray. But there was no actual darkness. A flood of soft lambent light poured out from the great glowing moon. From this point they could see the whole circuit of the island and the vastness of still sea that lay all round.

But they were oblivious to a beauty that at any other moment must have made its sublime appeal to them. For Clare at this moment did not really believe that she and Frank had much longer to live. She had come suddenly to Frank's way of thinking, that death was unimportant if one dies at the pinnacle of life. She stood therefore on heights that were sublime, because they were not only the first she had ever mounted, but promised to be the last.

With Frank it was different, as was bound to be the case with the protecting male, no matter how slim his chances for protection. Clare had misread his suggestion that they pass what might be their last moments together "on the heights." He had meant that they make their last stand on a dominating point rather than be taken like rabbits cowering in the whins.

AND yet he had not entirely abandoned hope. He was more inured than Clare to facing what promised swift destruction—what looked like the end of the road; and he had learned that such roads' ends might offer their barricades or sorties. Staring now through the moonlight that flooded all that place, he was able to see plainly that there was not yet any sign of their escape having been discovered. He was also immediately aware that standing there on the summit in that blaze of moonlight, he and Clare in their white clothes must loom up like a mark for mariners.

Another thing occurred to him. There should have been a lookout stationed on the mole. Frank knew how strict a watch Considine kept always against surprise, the approach of a vessel by day or by night. He could not understand the relaxation of this vigil.

"Get down, Clare," he said. "We're too conspicuous. I'll look round a bit."

She obeyed, sinking onto the dry spongy turf, which had

a curious aromatic perfume. Stooping low, Frank made a swift tour of inspection. In the bright lambent light now bathing the slopes, he could have seen any skulker trying to hide near the summit of the mole.

He returned to Clare and sank down by her side. "I don't understand it. No alarm so far—no watchman up here. There's not the slightest sign of life anywhere about."

She remembered then that Considine had ordered Sun Yat to relieve the lookout on the mole. "They probably know that their chief has let himself go again, and so they've all slacked down."

She reached out and drew him closely to her. "You were right, Frank, and I've been all wrong. Considine shall never have any part of me again, soul or mind or body. Death doesn't matter. Nothing can matter, as long as you are mine and I am yours."

Frank's arms went round her. They had become stronger arms in the last fortnight. The whole man was stronger. Even in her state of exaltation, Clare was aware of this change almost from a disembodied spirit to one clothed again in vigorous flesh and blood. It was as if the physical body, shamed to let the indomitable soul of the man fight on alone, had gathered substance to help do its part.

IN the rapture of the following moments neither was aware of a sudden commotion in the camp below. When, as if to warn them that such unvalled sanctuary could not long endure, there came through the soft diapason of wave sounds on the shore below the violent clanging of the *Caiman's* bell.

"They've found out," Frank said heavily. "Considine's come round and discovered you're gone."

Clare still clung to him. "That had to happen, Frank. There are only short glimpses of heaven here on earth. But now, we know—"

"Now it will be even harder, Clare."

"Yes, perhaps—but easier too. Nobody, not even Considine, can ever take it away. Listen—you'd think they'd all gone mad down there."

The clangor of the bell had ceased, but the uproar that now followed it was even more appalling. Some great voice was bellowing frenzied orders, these indistinguishable to Clare and Frank because of the medley of shouts and yells that interwove it. On hands and knees they crawled to a sort of lip of the shallow depression that concealed them, and peered down at the colony beneath.

Men were rushing frantically about, in and out of the factory and a long cabin just behind it. Five or six were tumbling into the yacht's boat. They shoved off and started to row out. From the *Caiman* came the bellowing voice.

"Considine, bawling through a big megaphone," Frank muttered. "He's certainly making row enough over your escape."

But Clare was staring out to sea. Her hand fell on Frank's arm with a grip that gave him a sudden stab of pain. "Look! Oh, Frank—look—look!"

The moon was by this time high enough to lighten the whole circumference of sea, of which they were the center. To the southward the horizon was cut sharp and clear. Just inside it was a dark blot from which rose a slender perpendicular line that was ruled in black against the vague bluish sky.

A scream burst from Clare. She flung herself against Frank, clasping him close.

"Oh, Frank, darling—do you see? Do you understand? It's the *Jacana*—Ivan—come back to rescue us. And this time he has come all cleared for action—all set to fight!"

The battle which followed, and the extraordinary attack on Devil's Island which came afterward, bring this live novel to a brilliant climax—in our forthcoming May issue.

REAL EXPERIENCES

Five Days in a Blow-out

WHEN one has spent thirty-five years as a hunter, trapper and guide in remote places of two continents, contacts with danger are unavoidable and death is often the consequence of a mistake.

Perhaps my closest call from the other side happened several years ago in the lava beds of Central Oregon where I had gone with a partner to spend the winter trapping for wildcats and coyotes. We had put out about a hundred sets for these animals and decided we would explore a range of mountains lying to the northwest for fox and marten.

We built a cabin, established three leanto camps and strung out thirty miles of traps, making a five-day round from our headquarters camp.

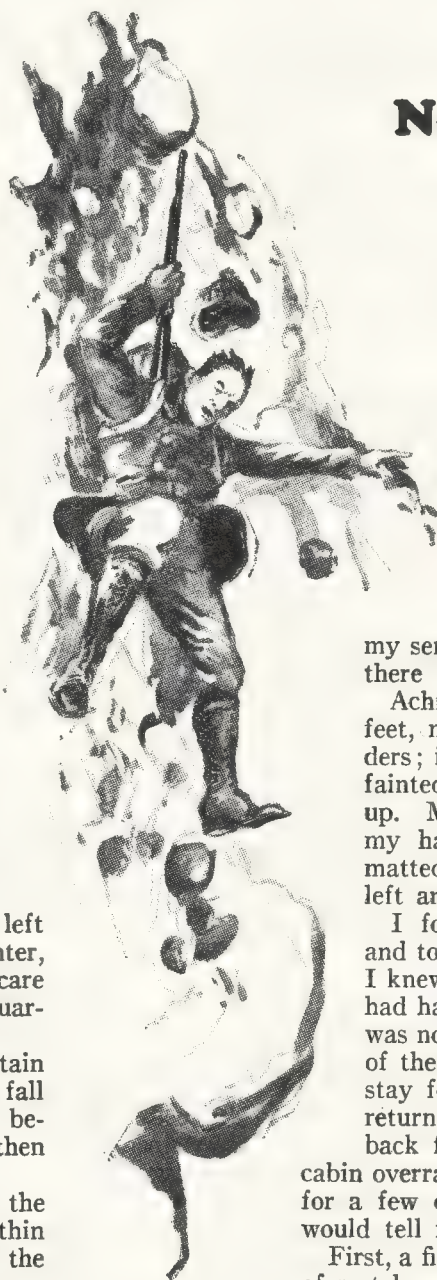
My partner chose the high line while I took care of the coyote and cat line. Thus it was we left camp together one day in the middle of the winter, he to be gone five days while I expected to take care of a certain number of traps and return to headquarters each night.

Lava beds are treacherous at best as they contain numerous crevices where a misstep means a bad fall and possibly a broken leg, the narrower cracks being especially dangerous after a snowfall, for then they are hidden.

One bad place in particular I had noticed; the trail we traveled along one trap line passed within a few feet of this place. It was a large blister of the lava flow that had burst and left the top open—a circular hole twenty feet deep, probably twenty-five feet in diameter on the surface and nearly double that at the bottom, located in a small flat covered with high sage and junipers. When we had been setting our traps we had commented in a jesting manner on the chance of falling into this hole.

The day was nearly gone and it was dark or nearly so when I took a dead and frozen cat out of a set three miles from camp, so instead of skinning out the animal I stuck it in my pack-sack and struck out for camp. Within a mile of headquarters I struck the flat and knowing I was close to the blowout, began to bear off to the right, as I supposed, to give the hole a wide berth. It was pitch dark by this time, and foggy. Sleet had started to bat me in the face. Suddenly I stumbled and fell. Instead of sprawling in the sage I struck space and plunged down. An instant of wild clawing, a million stars, then oblivion.

When I recovered consciousness I was lying in a jumbled mass of rocks. Sleet striking my face had brought me to



By
Ned Foster

The author of this vivid story of adventure in the "Devil's Garden" lava beds is a professional guide out in Idaho. Even guides, as you will see, sometimes make a misstep.

my senses. How long I had been lying there I don't know.

Aching all over, I painfully got to my feet, my pack-sack still on my shoulders; it overbalanced me and I fell and fainted again. Again I came to and sat up. My face was covered with blood, my hat was gone and my hair was matted and sticky. I tried to move my left arm but it was a dead weight.

I fought off another fainting spell and took mental stock of the situation. I knew all right where I was and what had happened to me—and the prospect was not pleasant. I was at the bottom of the lava blowout and here I was to stay for five days. When my partner returned he would know I had not been back for some time—our headquarters

cabin overran with mice when we were away for a few days and one look at the table would tell my partner as much as a book.

First, a fire! I had my belt-ax and plenty of matches. I pulled some sage and getting

back under the overhang on the sheltered side of the blow-out, soon had a fire going. There was lots of sage and a half-dozen or so dry juniper trees. I had fuel to last me out if I was careful. In my pack-sack I had a frying-pan and a quart can. For grub I had a cold bannock or so and a little tea and salt, for meat I had a twenty-pound wildcat, for water there was snow that I could melt; while for shelter, it was dry and windless under the overhang.

I took off my coat and rolled up the sleeve on my left arm. There was a bad fracture of one bone four inches above the wrist joint. It must be set. I filled the frying-pan with snow and put it on the fire to melt, while I split out some splints of dry juniper and tore up my shirt for bandages. I fastened one end of my belt around my wrist and the other around a stick. With my feet braced against the stick I pulled and worked the bone into place, holding the splints in place with my knees while I bandaged them. How it hurt! Sweat was pouring out of me and I nearly fainted several times, but fought it off. At last it was done. Next I bathed and bandaged my head

with the remains of my shirt—a long gash had been cut in my scalp by a rock—and made a sling for my arm from my pack-sack. Nothing to do now but wait. . . .

By the end of the second day I was hungry enough to eat wildcat, so I thawed it out and got it skinned after infinite labor, using my knees and teeth to aid my knife. For the next three days I had wildcat meat fried in wildcat grease, wildcat stew and wildcat soup. At the end of this time I could growl and spit like a wildcat.

I had spent four nights and four days in the blow-out and by this time I had walked a good trail around the circle at the bottom. The soreness was out of my body and partly from my head. So far as I could tell my arm was doing well; it did not pain me much, but was numb.

I still had plenty of wood, as I had been careful, but my tea was gone and nearly all my tobacco. The last was a catastrophe—but I still had some of the wildcat.

As the fourth day I had been in the blow-out drew to a close I fired a shot or two from my rifle, a 30-30 carbine.

The stock was broken from the fall but it was still serviceable. My partner should be back by this time if nothing had detained him. However, I knew that for various reasons he might lay over a day or two days. An hour or so after dark I fired two shots and getting no answer fried myself a wildcat steak and thought about bannock and bacon and beans. The fifth night passed and the fifth day. I fired shots at intervals of an hour or so during the afternoon and evening. At about nine o'clock I fired my last shot for that day, if I got no answer. Then faintly I heard the dull boom of the old Number 10 shotgun at our headquarters camp. Thirty minutes later my partner was standing over me with a rope. Hand over hand he hauled me up to the rim, then helped me over. "Your rifle-shot was loud," he said. "It sounded directly under the cabin. I knew instantly where you were, so I grabbed a rope and came on a lope. You must be nearly starved."

"For everything but wildcat!" I agreed fervently.

Wild Women

This interesting story comes from an Irishman who served in the British navy during the war, since learned engineering in an American university and held many interesting jobs.

By **G. Clarke**

A NICKNAME gained in childhood is soon dropped, but when one acquires a cognomen in later years it usually sticks, and often is highly embarrassing.

When the bo'sun's whistle piped "Landing parties away" just after dawn that chilly morning, I hitched up my ammunition-belt, glanced at the cylinders of my issue Webley and double-timed to the head of my men, who had already assembled on the "stage" preparatory to entering the cutters alongside, which were to be towed ashore.

It was the 29th of April, 1916. On the 22nd a German auxiliary cruiser and a submarine had attempted to land rifles, ammunition and machine-guns on the coast of Ireland for the use of the Nationalists. My ship had been with the squadron that had sunk the auxiliary and driven off the sub while the military on shore had captured the men who were receiving the munitions, amongst them being Sir Roger Casement. Two days later we had been ordered here to Dublin, where rebellion had broken out, led by the Sinn Fein societies. For thirty-six hours we had laid off North Wall, dropping an occasional shell into the city; now the squadron was landing sixteen hundred blue-jackets to coöperate with the military in clearing the town of Nationalists. I as a snootie, or midshipman, was included amongst the landing force, and had command of forty men and three petty officers.

When the pinnacles drew their tows of cutters alongside the wharves the men scrambled up the steep sides like



cats, cheering and yelling, but in a few moments they were drawn up at attention behind the freight sheds, standing stiffly and unblinking, while overhead whined an occasional sniper's bullet.

A group of army officers were there to receive us and were assigned to lead detachments to designated stops in the city. We officers surrounded the commander while he issued instructions. Mine were to take my men to a certain street near the docks and clear the houses of Nationalists who were occupying the houses there. All looters were to be shot on sight, and any civilian found with firearms in his hands was to be called upon to surrender and if he refused to do so was to be promptly fired upon. I repeated my instructions, acknowledged the introduction to a young army subaltern named Eaton who was to act as my guide, formed my men into sections of fours, and placing myself at their head swung off.

There was the sound of spasmodic firing from all over the city, and several pillars of smoke indicated that fires had been started in various places.

As we marched through the streets, sullen faces watched us from windows and doorways and occasionally a shot

was fired or some woman would yell curses from a rooftop, often accompanied by a cobblestone as large as a man's two fists. Officially the district was a quiet one, but the sentiment was markedly unfriendly.

In about twenty minutes we reached the mouth of the street which was our objective. It was short and narrow, comprising about twenty houses on each side—tall houses all connected together, of the tenement type, with flat roofs which were crowded with men carrying rifles.

As we halted, a volley was fired at us, but did no damage. I divided the men into two groups, giving Eaton sixteen and asking him to take the left side of the street. I placed five, under two petty officers, in the center of the street with orders to keep it clear, and led the remaining twenty into the first house on the right-hand side.

We were greeted by a burst of rifle-shots from the landing on the second floor, but by some miracle no one was hit. We fired one volley and then charged up the narrow stairs. As we reached the landing a murderous fire was poured into us, and the remaining petty officer and two other men dropped; then nine men swinging clubbed rifles were on us. It was nasty work.

I WAS knocked from my feet by the rush and could not regain them until it was all over and the survivors of the Nationalists, numbering three, had vanished up the stairs that led to the roof. We pursued them; when we appeared through the trapdoor we were again fired upon, and one man received a slight wound before we could reach the scanty cover afforded by the chimney-pots. There were about thirty men facing us, sniping from behind chimneys and over the rims of trapdoors with which each house was provided.

It took but a few minutes to dislodge them, and leaving ten men on the roofs with orders to make prisoners of any that reappeared, I led the others to the trap of the second house. We searched it from top to bottom, but with the exception of a frightened woman with two children it was empty. As I emerged into the street again Eaton called to me from the opposite doorway. When I joined him I found that he had been wounded twice, the lobe of one ear had been shot away, his face was badly powder-burned, and he had a bullet-wound in the thigh. He had had a tough time over on his side and had lost seven men. We dressed his wounds as well as we were able, and I summoned one of the petty officers, who had been left in the street, to take charge of that side. I also gave him two of the seven men that were left me.

The party in the street had not been idle; a group of men and boys had been firing on them continually from the far end of the street, and when the bluejackets fired in return they promptly fled, only to sneak back and resume their sniping. The petty officer also said that quite a number of armed men had been observed to leave the houses at the far end and march away.

I returned to my five men and we started in the third house. There were four men in there, but they offered no resistance and we took them to the roof and turned them over to the man I had left there, who had in the meantime captured eleven others of the Nationalists who had ventured back to the roofs. The next three houses were empty and I began to think that the men who had marched away had been the last of the defenders.

We became more confident, and when I entered the next house I was accompanied by only two men. Leaving them to search the ground floor, I ascended to the second. As I entered a door leading to a large bedroom, something struck me a violent blow on the forehead and I fell to my knees. The next second I felt myself jerked into the center of the room. I tried to struggle to my feet, but

immediately received such a storm of kicks and blows that I could not do so. Opening my eyes, I discovered that my captors were women,—regular amazons,—the type that worked in the fish-markets. They drew back for a moment and I managed to sit up. Then a voice called, "It's the murdering English officer! Bash his ugly head in for him!" I could hardly see for the blood that was running into my eyes from the cut in my forehead, but I could hear well enough and some of the things they suggested doing to me were far from nice.

Finally one "lady" had a brilliant idea. "Let's tear that damned uniform off him and send him back to his ship in petticoats!" she screamed, and the suggestion was greeted with loud acclaim. In an instant a dozen hands were tearing at my uniform. I struggled and yelled, hit and kicked, but it was useless; in a few seconds I had lost my clothes. Then three filthy, evil-smelling petticoats were forced over my head and my arms fastened behind me. They began to drag me toward the door, but just before we reached it, it burst violently open. There was a swirl of bodies and I fell to the floor again, where I was immediately joined by a woman, who grasping me by the hair with one hand, began to amuse herself with alternately banging my head on the floor, and tearing at the skin on my face with her finger-nails. Above us the battle raged. I think everyone in that room made it a point to step on me at least twice, and the boots of the sailors were no heavier than the clogs of the women.

In a few moments, my tormentor was pulled off me and through the blood and tears in my eyes, I managed to make out the grinning face of the petty officer I had left in the street. The nine women who had captured me were huddled in a corner; they had been harder to subdue than the men had been—several of them had serious injuries, as the men had been forced to use the butts of their rifles.

As soon as I could stand I demanded my pants, and they were handed me by a grinning sailor. They were a tattered ruin, but I do not know anything that has ever looked better to me than those pants! I donned them hurriedly under a running fire of comment from the uncowed "ladies."

As soon as I was dressed, I ordered the women taken to the street, which was no sooner reached than they promptly took to their heels. We let them go—I, for one, would not for a thousand pounds have raised a hand to detain them, and looking over the scratched faces of my men, I discerned there a similar feeling.

The women offered the last resistance; we found all the other houses empty and turning the street over to a military patrol, I led my men back to the wharves, our wounded having been taken to the military hospital near Mount Joy prison.

I found I had two men killed and eleven wounded. We had killed and wounded twenty-seven Nationalists and taken about forty prisoners.

At the wharves the commander raised his eyebrows in surprise at my appearance garbed in a pair of tattered trousers and a seaman's blouse, but I gave no explanations.

BY the end of the next day the rebellion was over. The Government lost over one hundred men killed and nearly four hundred wounded, the Nationalists two hundred killed and over six hundred wounded. A few days later sixteen of their leaders were court-martialed and shot.

I received no medal or citation for having fought what I consider the most dangerous engagement of the whole rebellion, but I certainly obtained a lot of unwelcome recognition—I was hilariously presented by my fellow-shipmen with a red flannel petticoat and received the unwelcome nickname of "Petticoat Clarke."

Buried Alive

By A. W. Evans

This terrifying experience in convict-worked mines of Georgia comes from a man who is chief mine inspector of Tennessee.



THIRTY-EIGHT years ago, in the mountains of North Georgia, a prosperous coal and coke industry was in its heyday. The mining camp contained one hundred eighty dwellings, a mine commissary, general office building, tipples, machine-shops, roundhouse for locomotives, four hundred coke ovens, and a coal washer. Not far from the camp stood the grim Georgia prison buildings and its white-washed wall, where eighteen hundred prisoners expiated their crimes against society. The majority of the men worked in the coal mines.

Such was the environment of my young manhood. I knew all of the convicts; they were my friends, and I was theirs. After leaving school my father, who was manager of the mining operation from 1873 to 1885, employed me as mining engineer. My duties required that I look after the engineering of three large coal mines, and I had supervision of all of the mine foremen.

On the day preceding the incident I relate, the Warden of the prison informed me that he had a tip that several desperate men were digging a hole from the mine to the surface to make an escape, and he would appreciate my investigation. At some places the coal seam rose upward on a twenty-degree pitch, and on top of these "rolls," which extended dangerously near the surface, the convicts would select an easy place to dig out. In most every instance a foreman visited these points daily, but where the coal had been mined out and great falls of roof had occurred the mine management took it for granted that the falls prevented interference on the part of the convicts.

I agreed to investigate the rumor and arrive at the truth. I called into conference a trusted mine foreman—a close friend of mine—by the name of John Bean, and told him that we would go into old Number Six main entry, if it was humanly possible. We discussed in exact detail the manner in which we might best negotiate this old entry. This portion of the mine had been abandoned for ten years, but certain entries were left open for drainage and ventilation. The rails had been removed, but the old ties were still in place.

After a thorough study of the mine map I decided to make a reconnaissance to a better understanding of the territory to be investigated. On the completion of this work we decided to go into Number Four mine, because we found a well-worn trail leading into this entry and having every appearance of recent travel.

The start was made, with Bean leading the way. We crawled on our hands and knees, working forward slowly and carefully, realizing our danger and studiously avoiding contact with any portion of the ragged roof, knowing

that the slightest touch might cause a fall that would completely close the entry. After six hundred feet of this laborious type of locomotion, we found the entry open and clear of heavy falls of roof, and to our relief stood on our feet and stretched our limbs. We were perspiring freely as the temperature was about sixty-seven degrees, and the mine atmosphere near the floor contained carbonic-acid gas. We were first appraised of this by the dimness of our lights and our feeling so acutely the rigors of our crawling. This condition of mine atmosphere is known as "black damp" to all old-time miners, and is usually met with in abandoned portions of a mine.

We filled our pipes, and sat down on a piece of fallen slate, to talk it over, as an argument had arisen as to our procedure. However, we unanimously agreed to follow this entry as long as we could walk upright. We had gone a distance of about one mile when I noticed several miners scurrying away, along our back trail. I remarked to Bean: "This don't look encouraging, John, seeing those rats leaving here! They are going out just like rats leaving the hold of a sinking ship. There is going to be another fall of roof."

He looked me squarely in the eyes, with a knowledge of its portent, and said, "Suppose it closes up the entry behind us."

"If it does, our friends will have to guess at the point in the mine where we died, and erect a monument on the surface," I observed.

He replied in that peculiar but not unpleasant Georgia drawl of his: "There may be logic in your philosophy, but it shore makes cold chills run up my spine!"

We reached the face of this entry, which we found had gone up a slope of about fifteen per cent for one hundred fifty feet, and found a hole three feet in diameter in the roof. We could see, by shining our lights upward, that the hole extended upward approximately twenty feet, and had ended against some solid sandstone, which had evidently stopped further exploitation. The peculiar phase was that we found no clay or slate on the floor, as evidence that the hole had been mined out. The convicts carried the refuse away in tow sacks and secreted it.

Elated that we had accomplished what we had set out to do, we retraced our steps to the foot of the slope, sat down with our backs against the rib of the entry, and ate our lunch.

After filling and lighting our pipes we discussed ways and means of effectually stopping this entry to prevent approach thereto. While sitting there I heard a kind of crunching noise, like boulders in a swollen mountain stream

scouring the bottom. I said, "Did you hear that?" No other word was spoken—there was not a sound, only the pulsations of our hearts. Presently we heard faint explosions like the firing of rapid-fire guns at a great distance.

I said, "John, the roof is caving, and there is going to be a great fall." As I arose to my feet, it came—the grand finale—one grand barrage with heavy "Berthas" and a sprinkling of 75's. There was thunder like that of a spring storm, and the wind roared past us, putting out our lights; then there came that silence that hurts—we were face to face with death.

John said, "Let's pray." But I replied: "It looks cowardly to pray when you have come to the end, when you have reached the one great climax of life. Take it like a soldier!"

I still had hope—the greatest thing in life—for it sustained me and gave me new strength. After lighting our lamps I looked at John. The tears were running pathetically down his cheeks; he looked ten years older. I told him we had one chance in fifty to make our retreat to safety, if we could go through the old water entry. This entry served as a main sewer for the mine, and took care of the drainage problem. We knew the bottom was "rolly," and we would encounter large pools of water, ranging in depth from two to five feet. We started with new hope. The entry was fairly free from large falls, and the working comparatively comfortable. We were going downhill, and came to the bottom. Here we ran into a body of black damp, which put out our lights. Putting our hands against the rib, we continued to walk, and soon discovered we

were going uphill. I struck a match, and it continued to burn, so I lighted my lamp.

We found ourselves on a rise, and could see a pool of water ahead of us at the bottom of the hill. It was noticeable that we were in a better atmosphere. We could breathe easier, and this gave us hope. We reached the water, and estimated its depth at five feet and its length at two hundred feet. It required courage to wade into this pool. We walked slowly; the water was icy cold. At last we reached the other side, and arrived at a cross entry that was in fair shape, and we knew where we were.

We had to walk to keep from freezing, as our clothes were soaking with water. After walking a distance of about one mile along this cross entry our utter despair of life, which had gripped us, had disappeared and we were thinking of the treasured instances of our lives. Every physical part of our makeup responded to the smallest effort on our part to think and to walk. We commenced whistling—a happy thought. We sat down to rest, and calculated that we had been in the mine twenty-six hours.

While sitting there we heard a rumbling sound, as of mining cars. That was the supreme moment of my life; it meant we were near civilization—rescue! We got up on a run, trotted down the entry and found we had come to a solid brick brattice. We could hear now distinctly the mining cars in motion. We took time about in shouting, and after what seemed an hour some one answered us on the other side of the wall. Deliverance!

Soon we were on the outside. The old mining camp was bathed in sunlight, and to me it made the finest picture I have ever seen—a cameo with a jade background.

Running a garage may seem a prosaic occupation, but after reading this lively story you will realize that it may become all too exciting.

The Rap

ONE o'clock A.M.; I was washing up. I'd been working on a customer's car since eight in the morning, and any mechanic will tell you that is a day's work. The first intimation I had of a visitor at this late hour was a curse as some one stumbled over a rolling jack I had left near the door. I opened the office door, and in the pale glow of the street light, made out the form of a man walking toward me.

"Your name Al?" he asked.

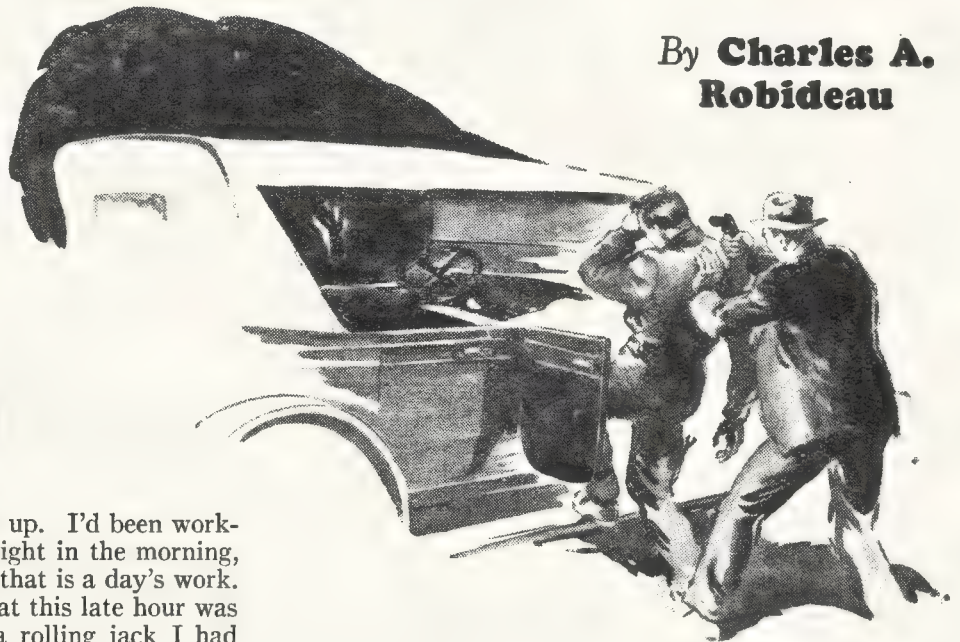
"Right the first time," I replied. "That's what the sign over the door reads, *Al's Garage*."

"O. K. I've got a job for you right away."

"Say, brother, there are other garages open tonight besides mine. I've been on the jump since eight this morning, and I'm going home. I'll call somebody else for you."

"Nothing doing. Tony told me to get you, so you better come along."

I knew that Tony was a rum-runner, but he was a good friend of mine and sent me quite a bit of business. On



By **Charles A. Robideau**

several occasions Tony had lent me money when I had been caught short. Tired as I was, I decided that one good turn deserved another.

"Where is the car?" I asked.

"Out on the road about five miles."

"What kind of a car is it?"

He named the make.

"Wait until I get some tools, and I'll be with you. Or how about taking the wrecker and towing it in? I can do a better job in here where there is plenty of light."

"I'll make all the necessary suggestions. Got those tools ready?"

"All set. Let's go," was my response.

I followed him out to the car, set my tool-kit on the floor, and climbed in beside him. I leaned back, and we headed for the outskirts of the town. I must have fallen asleep, because I suddenly came back to my senses as the car slid to a halt.

The driver turned with a nod. "There it is. Hop to it."

I stepped to the ground and picked up my tool-kit. Ahead of me, in the glare of the headlights, stood the disabled car. I looked around, but in the darkness I could not make out where we were. All there was for identification were two wheel-ruts with grass growing in the center. On both sides of the road corn grew to about the height of a man's shoulder.

I walked to the car and lifted one side of the hood. I turned to open the door, when I noticed there were two men in the car already. They were strangers to me.

I said: "Let me sit in there for a minute."

"Listen, kid," was the reply, "I'll do all the sitting there is to do. What do you want in here?"

"Start it up."

There was a hum of the starter, and after considerable coaxing the engine broke into a series of coughs. The timing-chain had jumped. There were a few more spasmodic coughs, and then the engine stopped.

"Well?" came from the one that had driven me up.

"Timing-chain," was my reply. "I'll have to take the whole front end off to fix it. You'll have to tow it into my place." I turned and picked up my tool-kit.

"Just a minute," sounded behind me.

I turned back inquiringly—and stared into the muzzle of an automatic.

"Now you won't get hurt if you fix that car right here. I'll pay you well when the job is all done."

It seemed strange to me that this friend of Tony should hold a gun on me; I could not make it out—and I said:

"Put the rod up, brother. If you are a friend of Tony, you know I'm on the level with you fellows."

With a grin on his face, he replied: "Tony may know you, but I don't."

"Suit yourself. Hold the rod if it makes you feel better. One of you give me a hand, and I'll have you out of here in about two hours, with luck."

He turned to one in the car. "Joe, give Al a hand here."

"What da hell! I didn' come wid youse to fix dis crock," was Joe's sullen answer.

I turned to the one holding the gun and cried: "I don't care what you've got in this car; I want help. If you want to get out of here before daylight, see that I get it."

WITH a laugh at my anger, he pocketed the automatic. "I guess Tony was right. Tell me what you want. I'll help you."

He proved to be a good helper, and with the help of two flashlights, it was about an hour and a half later that one man in the car stepped on the starter. The car broke into a steady hum. Suddenly it began to run in spurts.

"Hey! Leave that switch alone," I called.

"I aint got my mitt on no switch, you sap."

"All right; shut it off."

With the one helping me holding a flashlight, I checked all the wires on the engine, but found nothing wrong.

I opened the door on the driver's side: "Drag out. I've got to take a look at that switch."

Reluctantly he left his seat, and I crawled in. I stuck my head under the dash and soon found one of the switch wires loose. I tightened this, and soon had the car running. In getting out, I put my hand on the back of the seat, and in doing so dropped a wrench. I had pulled the back of the seat down to recover it, when a voice cautioned: "Hey! Get out and leave that seat alone."

"I dropped a wrench."

"I'll get it."

I stepped back, and when he tipped the seat forward to look for the wrench, I saw what looked like the side of a can they carry alcohol in. In the rear of the car I saw the corner of a box sticking out from under a blanket. On the corner of the box I read .38 Cal. Suddenly the seat was tipped back.

I took the offered wrench and picked up my tool-kit.

"She'll run now," I assured them.

The leader spoke to the other two. "Get going and see that you get there. You've got just about enough gas."

The starter whined, and the engine purred smoothly. There came the clash of gears, and the car shot away into the dawn.

A voice sounded beside me. "I saw you take a good look at the plates, kid, but you had better forget the number. It won't do you any good. Let's go. I'll drive you back."

I walked to the car. Just as I placed my foot on the running-board, something hit me from behind. I saw a thousand shooting stars and then—eclipse.

UPON my awakening senses came a low steady sound I realized was the exhaust of a running motor. I opened my eyes, and became aware that I was lying on a cement floor. I got to my feet slowly and painfully. The floor had made me sore in every joint. A little light penetrated into the place from a window above me. Everything looked hazy to me. I put my hand to my head. It came away wet with blood. In the dim light I made out a furnace, and beyond, a flight of stairs leading above. I mounted these. Opening a door, I found myself out in the bright sunshine. It took a few minutes for things to clear. Finally I took stock of my surroundings, and found I was leaning against the wall of my own garage. I turned the corner and entered. There in the car I had heard running sat Tony.

"A swell gang of mugs you pal around with!" I said.

Tony got out of the car and followed me into the office.

"What do you mean, a swell gang of mugs?" he asked.

I put my hand to my head. I showed it to him covered with blood. "That's what I mean! You send one of your friends here to me. I go out to help him, and when the job is all done, he beans me."

"Oh, yeah? Tell me about it."

I turned to the wash-rack; and while I cleaned up, I related the whole story to him.

"I'm sorry, but I don't know them, Al."

"Well, whether you know them or not, there will be no more of your friends at night. When you get stuck, it's O. K. with me; but that's all."

"Got a smoke?" he inquired.

Surprised, I put my hand into my pocket to get my cigarettes, and drew out a folded piece of paper instead. I opened it. A hundred-dollar bill fluttered to the floor. I stooped, picked it up and put it into my pocket.

Tony read the note over my shoulder.

Here is a century for the job, kid. Thanks for the smokes. Who is Tony, anyway? That was a guess on my part.

"Well, that's not a bad night's pay," came over my shoulder. "The tractor up at the farm won't start. Take a look at it, will you? See you later."

He turned, with a smile on his face, started his car. With a wave of his hand he drove off. I laughed.

The hundred came in mighty handy just at this time. The only thing that puzzles me is the rap on the head. The note and money isn't such a mystery. You see, Tony doesn't smoke.

A Canadian officer here gives us a colorful record of what happened to him at Ypres—and on the way to the hospital afterward.



One Night I Remember

By J. E. March

EARLY in June, 1916, the Germans facing the Third Canadian Division in front of Ypres made a push toward that ruined Belgian city, and immediately involved the whole Canadian corps in one of the toughest, and literally dirtiest battles of the war. Only Passchendaele, during the week that grim ridge was taken, exceeded it for misery and filth, and in the number of men who fell wounded into shell-holes and drowned in liquid mud.

Our outfit came to this fight from the right bank of the Ypres-Comines canal, a division of us. We came in a hurry through the night to relieve tired, decimated troops, and the reek of the salient, which was the odor of dead men and horses and diseased and forgotten things, was heavy in our nostrils. Down through Hell-fire Corner, along the railway embankment and up the road through Zillebecke Village, where the dressing-stations were in the cellars of the rubble heaps that had been houses.

Do you remember, you old soldiers?

We came up through the accompaniment of the guns, heavy barrages which set up a continuous vibration in the eardrums, and a quiver in the body which was almost unbearable, and until the flashes of the guns and the bursting shells showed in what seemed to be a perpetual sea of leaping flame against the blackness of the night. It was at once hellish and beautiful, that flat plain of death.

From the railway embankment the road was littered with the dead. Highlanders, Canadians, Germans—still clay, and all one in the brotherhood of the mud. The fighting had been heavy along there; bitter fighting in the choking passion of close battle, and the din of it was just ahead of us. A hard, sweating march through the night, dead men under foot, shells hurtling overhead, and close conflict in the fevered, flare-shot blackness ahead. The men behind me, even then the veterans of some eight months in France and Flanders, began to curse—not the cursing brought on by the angers of civilian life, but the peculiar purring, almost monotonous undertone cursing of men who had forgotten all else but the primeval lust to kill and be killed. It was a good sign, of warriors pressing eagerly to the fight.

Beyond Zillebecke Village, where the road slopes gently upward, a shell bursting in the air in front and slightly above our line cut nine of us out of our advancing wave.

Splinters of the metal casing tore the muscles of my left shoulder, smashed my knee, and disrupted my left eardrum, and the concussion blew me, stunned and partially paralyzed, into the ditch. My last thought was an impersonal flash that this was just one more for the mud.

I felt very comfortable and didn't want to wake up—but some one, his voice suddenly recognizable as that of Private Arsenault, was assuring Belyea, my runner, that the officer was dead.

"Head all smashed; I can feel his blankety brains," Arsenault reported after a brief examination in the dark.

"Help me drag him over to the side here. Don't want no truck to run over him," Belyea replied with commendable thought, forgetting that trucks did not run that way.

"I'll take his revolver. Cleaned the damn' thing often enough to inherit it. Maybe I can sell it for a few francs."

The dragging to the roadside followed. It hurt, and I found my voice in profanity. My brains, I emphasized, were still inside my skull, which was tough. "And Belyea, give me back that gun before you shoot yourself!"

"What," muttered Arsenault, pursuing his honest conviction, "is in your hair—if it aint brains?"

I explained at length that it was mud; that it was this and so kind of mud; that I had swallowed a great deal of it; and would they mind doing something about my shoulder and knee before I was poisoned beyond all redemption; and damn the war, and especially the Ypres salient!

This was better. This was something understandable, and even in the darkness the spirit of the troops could be felt improving. They propped me up and went to work. Arsenault explained that six of the nine were killed outright, and two others wounded.

We lay in the shelter of a little rise in the ground with the Hun shells bursting steadily around us. Just why we weren't wiped out is beyond all explanation. The two men were nervous, and I was frankly scared, although I knew that my number was up, anyway, if I didn't get to a dressing-station within a reasonable time. The two men had managed to strip away my army tunic and shirts, and had bandaged my shoulder, mud and all. They had simplified the dressing problem by tying the sleeves of my coat and shirts around my neck so that I was lying on a fairish pad of garments with my chest bare to all the weather.

The knee offered a simpler problem. They had ripped my breeches down one side with a knife, and now strapped a tourniquet, improvised from a cord, above the wound, and another bandage around it. It was simple, and it hurt so much that I wished they had left me in the ditch.

The shell-fire continued without let-up, and a series of close bursts drove both Arsenault and Belyea waist-deep into the roadside ditch. I felt rather than saw them go. They yelled and pulled me in after them, and after one strangled curse I promptly sank. Belyea fished me out and shoved me back on the side of the road. That was horror, worse than shell-fire. The mud stank. It was in my eyes, mouth and hair. It covered my chest with cold slime, and had even run down inside my breeches.

MORE shells came over. The country between us and Zillebecke was under a heavy barrage as the Huns strove to keep further reinforcements from coming up. Our outfit was well ahead, and by the sounds drifting back had taken a trench or found one. A little later two walking wounded drifted into our group, and said a trench had been taken. Arsenault grunted. I listened to hear more.

"I think I'll try for the dressing-station." The wounded man was thinking out loud. "I'll go straight back and try to get in there back of the barrage."

"Doubt you can do it," Arsenault replied. "But I'll carry him and we'll try."

He heaved himself out of the ditch and bent over me. Belyea followed, and the two of them lifted me upright. A wave of fire and pain shot through my body, and I was violently sick. I have very little memory of that journey to the battalion first-aid post. There were shell-holes full of scum and water into which we fell, and others equally horrible in which we took shelter. Once I remember being shoved behind a very dead horse while shell splinters whizzed and hissed and thudded into the ground and into the carcass. Bits of that dead horse were blown off, and we were smeared with the pieces. Later there was a terrific explosion, and a sickening scream of agony from the darkness. Arsenault crawled out and came back dragging one of the other wounded men. The poor devil was badly mauled, and we waited a few minutes for him to die. I passed out, fainted, shortly afterward.

I regained consciousness as they were shoving me through what had once been a coal chute. I went through feet first and landed in the arms of a businesslike and overworked medical orderly. He grunted and wiped the mud and other things from my face and chest, and showed surprise when he recognized me.

"My God!" he gasped. "The bombing officer—and in one hell of a mess!"

I was—there was no doubt of that; and the orderly surveyed me with admiration not tinged with awe. Then he took off the tangle of muddy garments that were tied around my neck, and cut away the bandages on my shoulder. He looked at the wound. Then he took a sponge out of a bucket of iodine and squeezed it over the wound. It seared and stung like a hot iron. I cursed, and he grinned, and a cheerful voice from the other end of the cellar said:

"Hit at last, Eddie! Thought you were going to last forever."

I recognized the regimental doctor. He came and looked me over, and because he was a young doctor and a friend of mine, volunteered the information that I was certainly one hell of a sight. I endeavored to explain, but in the midst of it he picked up a pair of ghoulishly shaped forceps with which he reached down inside the wound and pulled out a piece of metal about the general size and shape of a thumb. This he regarded gravely and apparently with deep professional interest. I began to get mad. He prod-

ded into the wound again and came out with a piece of shirt, tucked the shell-splinter into a breeches pocket and turned his attention to my knee, doing something there which made the red spots dance in front of my eyes. The doctor rendered judgment while the orderly did a thorough job of bandaging.

"The chunk in your shoulder missed your lungs," he said, "so you'll live; and a surgeon can fix your knee almost as good as ever."

Along one wall a number of badly wounded were quietly lying on blankets. It was impossible to move them, and I had been long enough in the game to know that a good percentage of them would die of peritonitis. I felt sick and tired and wished myself away from there, and wondered why war was necessary. There was, I decided, a tremendous difference between the actuality and the stuff the patriotic orators preached at home.

The odor of the aid post began to bother me. It was a new smell compounded of iodine, blood, dampness and sweaty bodies. It was hot and sticky, and the flames of the candles flickered and burned ghastly yellow in the heavy air. Wounded men kept coming through the coal-hole, feet first—always feet first.

I felt a madness coming on and asked the orderly to take the feet away. I knew that was foolish, but they obligingly turned me around so I couldn't see the chute.

THE horse ambulances came up to the dressing-station in that chilling, dreary period just before the dawn when the badly wounded die. The wounded, myself among them, were shoved out through the coal chute and loaded six to a wagon. The enemy shelling had died away to an occasional salvo, and our own guns were replying in kind. The salient was comparatively quiet.

The ambulance I was in rattled and bumped through the ruins of Zillebecke Village, and up the road toward the railway embankment. We didn't get there in that ambulance. The left front wheel lurched into a fairly deep shell-hole, and the outfit stopped with a jerk. Those of us on the right side were thrown out onto the floor, and a wild moment or two followed until the driver quieted the frightened horses. I was sprawled on the floor with two other wounded men across my body, and my face had been cut on the edge of a steel helmet. A burst of moaning and cursing subsided into silence. We were afraid to move. The driver and his orderly lifted us out one by one and laid us in a neat row in the mud of the road.

It was a painful business, but after the first outburst there was no complaint. We were resigned; fatalism had seized us; and most of us were too far gone to care anyway.

A second ambulance came up; we were loaded into it; then the orderly and driver brought in another wounded man. I was in a lower stretcher, and because the ambulance was full, they put him in on top of me. I held him on with my good arm, and asked him where he was hit. He did not answer, and the discovery a few minutes later that the back of his head had been split as if with an axe nearly finished me; I had no strength to shove him off.

We pulled into the brigade dressing-station about dawn, and as soon as they took me out of the ambulance, I was violently sick. A passing doctor, on hearing the story, said I shouldn't let a dead man worry me. A little later in the morning I was moved by motor ambulance to a clearing station located in a ruined boiler-house just outside of Ypres, just another unit on a stretcher in the long rows of wounded from that one night in the salient.

Afterward I journeyed comfortably from hospital to hospital and from operation to operation and eventually to England, where, after a long leave I was again declared fit for duty, and rejoined my battalion on the Somme.



The Mystery of Sunken Valley

*A not-soon-to-be-forgotten novelette of hard riding
and desperate fighting on a remote Southwestern range.*

By **ROLLIN BROWN**

MYSTERY dwells in lonely ranch-houses no less than in city streets; skeletons rattle in isolated mountain cabins even as in urban closets. When these are brought out into the open, we have the crisis of drama—and, sometimes, the blaze of gunfire in pitched battle. It is of these things that Rollin Brown writes in this wholly engrossing novelette—and of a gallant girl who rode with her intrepid lover through the extreme of peril to final victory. Be sure to read this truly exceptional story, and the many other good things scheduled for the forthcoming May number of—

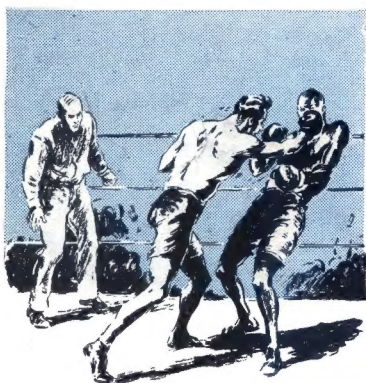
The **BLUE BOOK** MAGAZINE

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THE truth that is stranger than fiction—that is what we seek to capture for our readers in the prize stories of real experience and in the adventurous biographies that appear each month in this magazine. In most of them a heart-warming record of courage is described—the other fellow's courage, usually. Indeed, many stories offered are unavailable because the writer's inherent modesty has so minimized his own share in the episode that the story lacks drama. Or he merely narrates a story of heroism wherein he was simply a bystander; and as the rules require the memorable experience to be one's own, another must be given preference.

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this country of ours. And we are confident that you who read them will share in our enthusiasm for these plain records of memorable experience.



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